RONALD CARNAQUAY

BRADLEY GILMAN

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RONALD CARNAQUAY

A COMMERCIAL CLERGYMAN

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RONALD CARNAQUAY

A COMMERCIAL CLERGYMAN

BY

BRADLEY GILMAN

AUTHOR OF "THE PARSONAGE PORCH," "BACK TO THE SOIL," ETC., ETC.

"It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest."

ISAIAH xxiv. 2

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DEDICATION

To all earnest, devout ministers of Christ, — whoever or wherever they may be, — I dedicate this book, exhorting them to forget not their solemn vows of ordination, and to strive to keep their moral and spiritual ideals untarnished, amid the dust and vapors of this commercial age.

FOREWORD

THE aim of this book is to "hold the mirror up to nature," as manifested in certain phases of the church-life of our time.

Out of the kindness and sympathy which have surrounded me, for ten years, in my own parish, I have observed the fitful and sordid experiences of many other clergymen and parishes, and I have noted both comedy and tragedy. I now aim at portraying some of the hard facts and unhappy conditions of modern church-life, which need to be, — not blandly or timidly overlooked, but courageously faced, and studied, and remedied.

The fundamental idea of this book is the economic principle that "demand creates supply." The religious bodies of our time, who have "Ronald Carnaquays" in their pulpits, have them because they have "demanded" them, created them, nourished them.

This "demand," if analyzed, opens another problem, — not discussed here at length, — namely, the "over-churching" of most towns and cities in our land.

I commend the more ideal clergyman, Lawrence Freeman, to the reading public, as I would introduce

and commend a dear friend, whose high aims and earnest ministry I warmly approve. A personality different from his might have worked, with equal effectiveness, by methods different from those which he chose. Let each worker "be fully persuaded in his own mind." And let him not be disturbed by slight variations in outward ways and means, — the mere letter of truth, — so long as there is, within, a unity in the spirit of Christ.

When a church and preacher disregard the sacred leadership of Truth, and undervalue the worth of pastoral ministration, and subordinate worship to amusement, and when they test the merit or strength of a church and minister solely by mercantile standards, then that preacher and people have become commercial and sordid; then the higher vision is withdrawn; and "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

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CHAPTER I

THE ANNUAL MEETING

"The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." — Luke xvi. 8.

The Board of Trustees of Emmanuel Church was in session; or, to speak more correctly, it would be in session so soon as Dr. Mixer, chairman, could free his columnar neck from the embrace of its collar and tie. The evening was a warm one, the stuffy little vestry-room was oppressive, and Dr. Mixer had reached that period of age and that rotund character of body where his collar frequently caused him annoyance. This, or any annoyance, he was never heard to express, publicly; but there were those who could recollect his three wives (now reposing peacefully in the cemetery), and it was whispered that his habitual unctuous smile was left in his silk hat, at his front door, and was reserved — like the hat — for public use only. Dr. Mixer found some difficulty in removing the refractory linen band, and his lips moved silently — perhaps in prayer. But in a few moments his head resumed its normal level, his turgid countenance lost its inflamed color, and the full mouth and thick lips took up again their smiling duty; the collar and tie were laid on the writing-desk, or secular pulpit, at which the Doctor sat, and, in perspiring freedom, he called the meeting to order.

There was a general mopping of glistening faces, among the half dozen men who composed the Board; but none of them imitated his leader's conduct, as to collar and tie: the social scale was so nicely adjusted among them that each knew that any following of the chairman's example, in this particular, would be considered an infringement of personal rights. For Dr. Mixer occupied, in Emmanuel Church, precisely the position occupied by a political "boss," in affairs municipal. He was the one person around whom the activities of the church revolved. He carried the whole institution in his pocket. He had begun life as an errand-boy in a drug store, had shrewdly saved his pennies, was presently allowed to specialize his duties by presiding at the soda fountain, and there his popularity began; with that shrewd, smiling, commercial instinct, which never since had deserted him, he knew how to adjust the proportion between froth and liquid, in the foaming glasses, so that each customer should be "pleased" (as they say in the trade), and yet the "two-and-four-sevenths line of profit" not be profaned. Afterward he started a drug store of his own; that is to say, he rented a room on the main street, and fitted it up with glittering decorations, and established a magnificent soda fountain, which surpassed all competitors, and seemed to far outshine "the wealth of Ormus or of Ind." He put up a gilded mortar and pestle over the door, and kept two or three jars of colored water in the windows; incidentally he arranged rows of bottles and boxes on the shelves. What was really behind their labels nobody was bold enough to say; moreover nobody cared; enough that it was plainly understood that in his store, the year round, the best assortment of appetizing drinks, hot or cold, could be found, of all the reputable drinking-stands in town.

So the young man throve, saved his money, slept in the back of the store, bought a stray mortgage now and then, and smiled on all whom he met. But his great *coup* was when he invented — or, as he solemnly expressed it, "discovered" — the remarkable compound known as "Mixer's Emollient," which afterward brought him wealth and what he was pleased to term "fame." Whether or not he ever learned, in his apprentice days, much about the pharmaceutical theory of "compatibles," at least he did learn three important things: first, that most human beings take a considerable quantity of medicine, etc., at one time or another; second, that some advance to the chronic stage, and contract the "medicine habit"; and third, that all seek a medicine which is ostensibly powerful, supposedly occult, and practically agreeable. Acting on this knowledge, he gave to the world "Mixer's Emollient, made from a recipe found on birch bark in an Indian grave." It was very palatable, with its honey-and-mint suggestiveness, was advertised to cure nearly all diseases, and met successfully most of the aches and pains known or fancied by self-hypnotized humanity. Thus began Dr. Mixer's rapid advance in wealth and power. On the strength of his "Discovery" he laughed with easy toleration when customers called him "Doctor," then instructed his clerk to refer to him by that title, and soon proudly and smilingly adopted the title, once and for all.

Thus, through gentle stages, "Doctor" Mixer had made his way, offending nobody, flattering most people, scattering unctuous but cleverly calculated smiles on all sides. For five years he had held the sceptre of authority over Emmanuel Church. During twenty years he had been a pewholder; at first unnoticed, then tolerated, then used; at last, when the chapel was projected, came his opportunity; he calmly put down his name for

one thousand dollars; put it down for that amount after Deacon Fletcher and Lawyer Stringham, the society's richest men, had given only five hundred dollars each. At once Emmanuel Church awakened to the knowledge that "Doctor" Mixer had been "bountifully blessed of the Lord with this world's goods"; and the parish, at its next meeting, elected him to its board of trustees.

Therefore, when Dr. Mixer bared his large flabby neck, and laid his collar (marked with the number nineteen) on the writing-desk, he did so with a calm consciousness of ownership of not only the collar and tie, but of the desk, and, for that matter, of a large part of the furniture and even the chapel itself.

"The meeting will come to order," he said, running his eye over the group, and dexterously wiping the perspiration from beneath his shirt-band. There was a quiet power in his slow, husky speech, which was born of his consciousness of the solidity of his investments in copper, and of new agencies recently established in the Western states, now sending in large orders for the Emollient.

"We have met this evening," he continued pleasantly, as if entertaining a company of friends, "to look over the parish accounts, and to discuss plans for the coming year." Then he put his hand into his pocket, in search of certain memoranda, and, not finding the slip of paper, recollected that he had left it in his hat, in the hall; but no surprise showed on his round smooth expansive face. He simply continued: "It seems highly proper that, having met thus, to take counsel together, concerning the work of the Lord, we should ask the Divine Guidance. Brother Fletcher, will you lead us in prayer?" And Brother Fletcher did "lead," and all bowed their heads — all except Dr. Mixer, who quietly glided out into the hall, secured his memoranda, returned to his place, and

was ready with a sonorous "Amen" when the proper moment arrived.

Next there was the singing of a hymn, little as most of those present felt like singing. The truth was that Emmanuel Church had fallen behind in its accounts, and these men, known as "Pillars of the church," were well aware that on them fell the responsibility; they knew that they held their positions of official eminence mainly because they were possessed of the largest pocket-books in the parish. However, the easy good-nature of their chairman was reassuring; nobody knew, better than did he, the extent of the society's indebtedness; yet his round face was placid, and his voice soothing. Therefore they took courage, and sang, with cumulative fervor, five stanzas of the hymn, "Blest be the tie that binds." The real tie that bound them, — yes, and chafed them — was a joint note which they had together signed, two months before, to raise money at the bank for current church expenses. However, they tried to feel the religious significance of the hymn, remote as it was, and came back, with a sigh, to the reading, by the treasurer, of the year's accounts.

A large part of the long list of items of expenditure awakened no special interest; and Mr. Pidge, the treasurer, read rapidly in an attenuated metallic voice. This was Mr. Pidge's one hour of glory, in the monotonous circling twelve months. He was a slender, dried-up creature, of fifty years, with small head, and no hair worth mentioning above the level of his abnormally large ears; but below that level he was fairly well supplied with bristling hair of flaming red, and he made the most of it. He cultivated two large "sides," which fell, like the pendulous ears of a beagle, far down on either side, and he ingeniously contrived to merge his rather slender anxious mustache with the hair of

his chin, near the corners of his mouth; so that, taken all together, Mr. Pidge could very properly hold up his head among bearded men. Yes, and when he did hold it up, it could be seen; it shone and shimmered, and outrivalled the marble skull on the statue of some mediæval saint.

Ordinarily Mr. Pidge was of a retiring nature; alert as a grasshopper, he rarely gave tongue. Mr. Pidge distrusted himself; and his little beady, red-rimmed eyes seemed to be watching for signs of distrust in other people. Then, too, Mr. Pidge was of a retiring and even repressed mental diathesis, partly because, for years, in all public meetings and in several boards, of which he was a member, he was always chosen clerk, or scribe, or secretary, — never mind the official name! the work came to Mr. Pidge. Others made speeches, Mr. Pidge recorded them; others offered resolutions, Mr. Pidge sat up late to transcribe them; others were appointed, "with the secretary, Mr. Pidge," to revise constitutions and draft by-laws, it was Mr. Pidge — stealing a few minutes at a time from his regular clerkly duties at the hay and grain office — who really did the work. Thus Mr. Pidge's baldness became more and more pronounced, his thin shoulders took on a sharper stoop, and his piping voice thinned to a more metallic timbre. But his eye was clear, the red hairy growth of underbrush encircled the lower half of his skull as a fiery assertiveness of masculinity, and his hand was steady and clever in its rapid tracing of letters and figures.

From Mr. Pidge's full itemized report, two things were evident to all present; and, without any open word as yet, every man was thinking about them. They were these items, widely separated, in the three-page report, yet invisibly connected by every listener: first, what Mr. Pidge always called, always had called,

and always would call, "a *deffissit*" (accent on penultimate); and second, a "falling-off in pew-rentals." The deficit was about one thousand dollars, and the falling-off in pew-rentals was about five hundred dollars. The shortage, additional to this failure of rentals, was due to the fact that a certain capitalist, who had been holding some mine stock (long ago given to the church by a "pillar," now gone to his reward), had thrown the stock back on the treasurer, with the curt explanation that the stock never had been worth anything, but he had paid a few years' premiums on it, for the sake of the church and the memory of his mother who had worshipped there. This reversal had been known for a month past by several of the trustees, and they had disinterred, many times over, the memory of that sainted "pillar," and had said very plain things about him, in the bosom of their families, and had considerably recast their phraseology about him whenever they had occasion to mention him in prayer-meeting.

However, that item of the report could not be altered, or in any way affected. But there were two other points which must be considered: these were the two which had really brought the trustees together; they all knew it, and they straightway took them up. Mr. Blaney, a short, dark, nervous man of forty years, rose from his seat and cleared his throat. Now if Mr. Blaney, or any of the men present, had spoken the exact truth, as each held it and faced it and rebelled at it in his own heart, he would have said briefly: "Mr. Chairman, we all see that we have run behind, in our income, one thousand dollars; the reporter of the *Morning Courier* will drop in here, a half hour hence, to ask for an item. We will not tell him the plain truth, for we will not have our weakness known to the town in general and to the other churches in particular. We must therefore adopt some

subterfuge, by which we can cover our decrease in numbers and income. What shall it be?"

That was what every one of them was really thinking, but not one of them would have expressed it. Furthermore, in that same overchurched town, during that same month, a half dozen other boards of trustees would face the same problem, and would "hedge" about it in the same way; and this was the commonly adopted way. "Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Blaney, speaking with fluency and rapidity, his shifty eyes skimming lightly about the room, his words the redundant outpouring of one who loved talk more than life (at least more than money; for the voluble little man had talked himself out of several good clerkships), — "Mr. Chairman, we have listened, with great interest and pleasure, to this very full and complete and comprehensive report, which our honored brother, Mr. Pidge, has prepared and given to us here this evening. Whatever Mr. Pidge's hand finds to do, that it does with zeal and might." (With a profound bow in Mr. Pidge's direction. Mr. Pidge apparently absorbed in writing notes. Mr. Blaney had been Mr. Pidge's unsuccessful competitor for the parish clerkship ten years before.) "Mr. Chairman, it now behooves us, as loyal stewards of the Lord, in view of this inevitable and unavoidable *def*icit" — (accent very distinctly put on first syllable, for the benefit of Mr. — well, for the benefit of any illiterate person who might be present) — "in view of this regrettable deficit, it behooves us to consider and take counsel together, and adopt such means and measures as shall seem probably and likely, in God's providence, to bring us forth from our wilderness of wanderings, and set our feet again in the highway of prosperity, and make our desert to blossom as the rose, and the towers of our Zion to shine afar in the face of her enemies."

Translated, that meant, "Let's put on a bold front and raise this money, or seem to, and fix up our report for the public to read, and show the town that we are not dead yet!" This was, in substance, what Dr. Mixer had said to Mr. Blaney the day before; and Mr. Blaney now gave it out to the meeting, in his own copious verbiage, quite to the satisfaction of Dr. Mixer, and always to the silent and sometimes to the envious admiration of all present. There were two men in that company who had an almost boundless admiration for what they would have called "the gift of language," as exemplified in Mr. Blaney. One of these men was Dr. Mixer, who had made his way by a shrewd wit, concealed behind a continuous succession of creasy smiles. "The Doctor," as he loved best to be called, could *think* his way very clearly to the logical financial goal of an investment in real estate, but could not steer, with any sort of success, through the shoals and reefs of public speech. He had made trial of it; he had known the unrest of ambition for oratorical dominance, but two or three disastrous failures had cured him, and restored his usual shrewd estimate of his own powers. But his personal failure, in this showy field, made him the more admiring of the gift of fluency (or fluidity) in others; and although he often quietly despised the lack of self-control which allowed his henchman Blaney to "go off at half-cock," on any and all subjects and occasions, yet, given the right time and theme, Blaney was often very "happy" in his weaving of words, like colored yarns, into a fabric which was without definite design. So "The Doctor" despised and admired and at times even almost hated him; but these various emotions did not prevent his using his voluble friend, sometimes to their mutual advantage, sometimes not.

The other man who most admired such speech as

came easily to Mr. Blaney's tongue was Mr. Marshall. He was a large, shy man, honest in eye, upright in deed, slow in thought, and even slower in speech. He was a comparatively new man in the society, and was not considered quite sound in the faith by some who had talked with him in the Bible Class; but the woollen mill, of which he was now owner, after years of hard work, was very prosperous; and Mr. Marshall had recently changed his residence — pushed to it by his wife — from a small house on an obscure street to a large one on the main avenue; so that his eligibility to the board had become quite evident, and his wife had compelled him to accept the election, and thus to move one more step toward the social front.

Over the plain, matter-of-fact, sincere nature of Mr. Marshall, Blaney's fluent delivery of sonorous words and rounded sentences always acted like a charm; he was fascinated by them. Such power as a man like Mr. Blaney possessed seemed to him quite beyond any quality which he could ever hope to command; yet the town in general understood that few men could equal Thomas Marshall in sifting the essentials of a complicated business tangle from the non-essentials. He had the valuable faculty of seeing facts as they really were, in the world of business; which is a faculty not possessed by everybody, and least of all by a fanciful nature like Mr. Blaney's, who sees rainbows spanning the mountain tops and arching to pots of gold in the valleys, when the plain truth is that these bows of promise are only arcs of small dimension, hazily seen amid the spray cast up by the fountain of its own effervescent temperament.

So Mr. Marshall did what many another single-minded modest soul has done, heartily and humbly admired one who was inferior to himself, for showy qualities which

were not comparable with the sturdy virtues and solid worth of his own nature. Consequently, Mr. Marshall kindled under the glow of Mr. Blaney's rhetoric; and, after a brief pause had followed that gentleman's subsidence, he moved uneasily in his seat, as if he had been a punishable schoolboy, and murmured indistinctly, "Let's make up the difference!" Then he grew red at his own temerity in thus breaking in upon the order of a formal meeting, and pulled nervously at his heavy black beard, as if bent on having it out by the roots then and there.

Dr. Mixer was sitting comfortably at the desk, a big palm-leaf fan in each hand, looking uncommonly like an elephant fanning himself with his ears; his full-moon face wore an expression of remote but kindly approval of whatever might be said or done; in fact, he was reasonably sure, beforehand, of the general course of events. At the half-audible remarks of Mr. Marshall his half-closed eyes brightened perceptibly. He was commonly believed to be slightly, very slightly, deaf; that was a belief which, however well or ill founded, was a very useful one, at times, to him. If only you can lead an inquisitive customer to repeat his troublesome questions about some medicine, you gain time to prescribe for him the exact — well, not the exact truth, but the exact answer which his nature needs. Dr. Mixer, "Chemist," did a considerable amount of that sort of prescription work; and such prescriptions were always sugar-coated with a benevolent, mucilaginous smile. Then, too, a reputation for being "hard of hearing" was very useful, at times, when an angry customer presented himself, after absorbing into his corporeality the vitalizing forces of a twentieth bottle of Emollient, and declared angrily that his back was as stiff as ever, and his mouth had the same bad taste in

the morning, and the Emollient was a fraud, and the money should be refunded, and the apothecary who sold such stuff ought, etc., etc. At such trying times the "Doctor" beamed more expansively than ever, put his palm helpfully behind his ear, and then suddenly noticed that his clerk was calling him, from behind the gilded screen in the rear of the store, and moved apologetically, but rapidly, away, leaving his benevolent smile resting upon that irate customer like a benediction of regretful kindliness.

In these ways Dr. Mixer was often surprisingly deaf; yet again there were times when his hearing was microscopic, or micro-audic, so to say. As in the present case, he was always marvellously quick to hear any offer of money; and he ceased, for a moment, to ply his fans, and asked slowly, "Yes, Brother Marshall, and how soon do you think we could raise the amount, one thousand, required?"

Mr. Marshall again became red, and stirred uneasily in his seat. All were awaiting his reply; he must speak — he must actually break that oppressive, expectant silence. Words always came from him, at such formal times, with far greater difficulty than dollars; he could not find his first syllable; and he nudged his next neighbor, and whispered violently, — so violently that all present could hear perfectly well, — "Tell him I'll give a hundred!" Then he sank back and pulled desperately at his beard.

"Brother Marshall says he will give a hundred;" called out the man thus addressed; and he sat up quite straight, as he made this announcement, being himself a man of meagre possessions, unable to make so large a subscription, yet with a sudden feeling that in naming this large sum for his neighbor he became somehow involved creditably in the generosity of the act.

Then "Brother Blaney," being "inside" the methods of church management, arose and made another little speech, in which he eloquently referred to the invariable generosity of Brother Marshall, and then passed into a series of etymological and grammatical and rhetorical convolutions which stranded Mr. Marshall, but was understood by the chairman and a few others; so that when he finished, Dr. Mixer quickly took up the thread. "Yes, I agree with the brother, that we would need at least a week to canvass the society; and, at his suggestion, I name Brother Marshall and Brother Nelson as a committee for this important work. The next question which we need to consider is—" At this point the door opened slightly and a slender young fellow came in, glanced comprehensively around the room, and dropped into the nearest seat.

This was the dreaded reporter from the *Morning Courier*, and Dr. Mixer was uneasy. The meeting had not quite reached the stage where the reporter's visit could safely be received; but, at an almost imperceptible nod of the presiding officer's head, Mr. Blaney briskly arose and went to the young man, greeted him warmly, and led him out into the hall, where they remained talking together for several minutes. The reporters always liked to get their accounts of fairs and picnics and conferences and other church doings from Mr. Blaney, because he gave them verbatim; no need afterward to retouch phrases and reconstruct sentences; from Mr. Blaney's lips words and clauses fell into their places as perfectly as did the previously planned and carefully squared stones and timbers of Solomon's noiselessly built temple.

Therefore it mattered not very greatly what was done during the remainder of the meeting of the trustees. Dr. Mixer presided tranquilly; for he and Mr. Blaney,

and one or two others of the board, knew that the *Morning Courier* would contain — as indeed it did — the next day, a glowing account of the "zeal and earnestness of Emmanuel Church," with this casual statement at the end, that the treasurer's report showed a balance on hand, for year now closed, of $61.17.

Thus the pride of all the church members was preserved, the voice of criticism and calumny was nipped in the bud, and — one other quiet fact — Mr. Pidge, treasurer, filed away a check for $1061.17, signed by G. Washington Mixer, and knew that the note on demand, which he had given in exchange, would be presented by the "Doctor" as soon as the subscription committee had accomplished their distasteful work. Thus were the annoying exactions of financial loans met, thus was the "Zion" of Emmanuel Church vindicated in the face of her enemies, thus was the cause of "Religion" made to triumph over the opposition and ill will of an unregenerate world.

CHAPTER II

THE SEAMY SIDE

"Religious ideas have the fate of melodies, which one sets afloat in the world, are taken up by all sorts of instruments, coarse, feeble, and out of tune, until people are in danger of crying out that the melody itself is distasteful." — GEORGE ELIOT.

EMMANUEL CHURCH had never kept a minister longer than seven years. During its eventful existence of forty-three years, this Vineyard of the Lord had been cultivated, with varying success, by nine husbandmen, now toiling elsewhere, or resting in heaven. It was the general impression that the best and ablest and most "consecrated" of these men were the earliest ones in the list. Among the later ones there seemed to have been several with glaring faults and fatal defects; but the farther back you went in your investigations, the more efficient and admirable you found these Shepherds of the flock to have been; until, coming to the man first on the list, the founder of the society (the leader of the exodus from the old North Church), you would gain the impression — from the three garrulous old women who had formed a part of that turbulent secession — that those days were a Golden Age, and that the Rev. Thaddeus Meredith had walked always with a saint's halo about his head.

However, explain the many changes of pastors as best you could, the significant fact remained that Emmanuel Church had never kept any minister long. One incumbent had stayed seven years, and another six; but the others had stayed only two, and three,

and four years each. Nevertheless there were not wanting applicants, whenever the news went out through the denomination that Emmanuel pulpit was vacant. Probably each newcomer felt that his predecessors need not have failed as they did; and then, too, there is in every heart, even in the heart clerical, a certain eagerness for the unknown and uncertain, and a fascination about pitting one's prowess against Chance. The only minister, in the ominously long list, who had gone away of his own free will and choice, left behind him the largest number of regretful admirers. He was a clever young man, who was born with twice the worldly wisdom ever attained by most clergymen, even after forty years of experience; and that young man preached well, never said the wrong word, never reorganized anything, distributed compliments freely, made each of the ten leading families feel that it was the one group nearest and dearest to his heart out of all the parish, praised the beauty of the church edifice, extolled the character of the membership, and frequently declared that nothing could ever induce him to leave such admirable people. Then, after two bright years of clear-headed and cool-hearted work, he suddenly accepted a "call" to another church; and, leaving a shower of graceful, complimentary, eloquent phrases of regret behind him, he took his flight. And Emmanuel Church put on sackcloth and bought a large photograph of him for the chapel; and only a few penetrating minds ever discovered that the talented young man had never cared an atom for anybody in the church, and had viewed his professional life precisely as a shrewd lawyer views his, and had conducted it with unvarying skill and eminent success.

Still, these people of independent judgment were very few in number. The large majority mourned their

brilliant leader's departure, each feeling — as he or she recalled that last handshake and that touching farewell on the street, or at the front door, or just after the Thursday meeting — that he or she was the one person whom the young clergyman most regretted leaving.

This brief pastorate was the only one, in the long list, where Emmanuel Church had failed to gain a firm, restraining, compulsory grasp on its minister. During the installation services, — which had become so frequent as almost to be a bore, — Emmanuel Church always sat smug and silent and patient, under the phrases unctuously pronounced on such occasions, about "this shepherd of his flock," and "this leader in the fields of truth," and all the rest. They let such phrases pass, as fitting for the occasion, but meaningless in fact; and within a month the shepherd found that his sheep had developed claws and incisors, and that his leadership was about as genuine as that of the driven cart-horse, who precedes his master, but wincingly obeys whip and rein.

Into some such knowledge of Emmanuel Church as this, its present minister, the Rev. Lawrence Freeman, had slowly come, at the age of thirty-two, after an experience of three years as assistant in a large metropolitan church.

Freeman was about the last man that his college classmates would have selected as likely to become a clergyman, and was, indeed, one of those who were early chosen to play on the college eleven. He had taken fair rank in his studies, but had none of those characteristics — delicacy of frame, sedentary tendencies, a gift of fluent speech, gentleness of manners, and the like — which are supposed to early indicate the possession of spiritual qualities. And let it here be said that the clergyman who boasts, with ill-concealed pride, that

from his earliest childhood he desired to be a minister, probably has not developed into the strong, earnest, self-reliant type which this materialistic age most needs; for no child of five or ten can really perceive the essential requisites of the clerical life, and if drawn toward it, is so drawn because of an innate love of declamation and a desire for the fancied superiority of the man who is allowed to hold forth in sermons and addresses.

However, this was far from the thought and purpose of Lawrence Freeman. Up to the age of twenty, he had never seriously considered the ministry as a possible vocation; but an accidental interest, which was aroused in him by work in a "Boys' Club," and several conversations with an older cousin, a clergyman, whom he much respected — these had deeply influenced him. By nature he had but little fluency, and, at that age, no especial literary faculty. But deep in his heart was a rich well of pity and sympathy, and he possessed a naturally devout spirit; so that the few college men who knew him intimately easily understood his choice of profession. But those outside this circle laughed when they learned about it; and some jested over the fierce and protracted fight he had, in the sophomore year, with a policeman; and one recalled the cause of the "beauty mark" which Freeman carried in a long scar on his right temple, where he and a brutal teamster had gone down in a heap over a stairway together, the teamster having held a screaming dog up by one ear too long for Freeman's sympathies and nerves.

Thus it will be understood that the sturdy young man, of medium height, determined face, fearless gray eyes, and scarred forehead, was not of the conventional clerical type; but he had set himself, with dogged earnestness, to meet both the inner and outer requirements of his calling, and his work as an assistant minister had been

a true, though not a brilliant, success. With his three years' experience behind him, he presented himself to Emmanuel Church. There was little of a showy character in him to impress one, but he was — as a friend had said of him emphatically — "a man's minister," rather than "a woman's minister." Yet it had frequently happened that some woman in distress and under trial had found in him a quick, delicate sympathy, which, in her lighter modes and easier conditions, she had not suspected.

Freeman had never found it easy to express in words his really abundant emotions, except to his wife. This natural lack was a real regret to him. He was a sincere, earnest man, with high ideals of his chosen profession, with thorough training behind him, in college and seminary and at Leipsic, yet without any striking originality of thought or especial grace of manner.

Little as he realized it, the leaders in the church soon began to feel that they had been deceived in calling him. Unimportant as the matter seemed to a genuine, manly young fellow like him, it nevertheless had been an important factor in the "call" of the society that his father was a well-known college president and his mother was the daughter of a famous historian. So that, when Dr. Mixer and Mr. Blaney and Mr. Pidge and others of that ilk voted to "extend a call," they had a dimly defined feeling in their muddy hearts that they were somehow getting into "good society," and that they would presently be on intimate terms with people whose very names, heretofore, had glittered like stars in a clear but cold and distant sky.

Therefore, Mr. Freeman had been called; he had taken, in good earnest, the smooth, flattering phrases from Mr. Blaney's pen, — but signed by G. Washington Mixer, Chairman, — and with good will toward his new

flock, and a prayer to Heaven for strength and wisdom, he had entered on his work. That had happened fifteen months before; and not once had Dr. G. Washington Mixer been invited to the parsonage to meet the college president or the famous historian; and, in some vague way, the society felt that it had been grossly deceived, and it nourished its growing grievance.

Into the true "inwardness" of this malicious snobbery Lawrence Freeman never fully penetrated. It was so foreign to the simple instincts of his truth-loving nature that he could not be made to credit it, even after repeated observations by his clear-headed and self-reliant wife, the eldest of six sons and daughters, in a successful manufacturer's family.

In college he had lived simply, perforce, and had chosen for a chum, in the sophomore year, an athletic, whole-souled, enthusiastic son of a prosperous dry-goods merchant. That a young fellow should have a college president for a father seemed to Lawrence the easiest thing in the world; and that his mother should be the daughter of the famous historian had no especial value for him, because it had cost him nothing. Such are the standards and points of view of a healthful, properly trained, young American manhood. Still, there were many traits that Lawrence liked, in men and women, and many that he did not like. His dignified silence, in the presence of coarseness of speech or boorishness of manner, by no means "gave consent." At first this simplicity of personal bearing puzzled the pretentious leaders of Emmanuel Church; they were extremely conscious of the young man's family relationships, and were pleased that he had received a Ph.D. and had studied at Leipsic. All this screwed them up to a high notch of expectancy; but, as they met him, day after day, none of these high distinctions showed itself; there was nothing

of that stilted style of speech, or reference to distinguished relatives, which they had expected, and which, among men of the Mixer-Blaney type, is secretly believed to be the outward and visible sign of patrician birth or intellectual eminence. Therefore, after approaching him on various sides, expectant of a certain loftiness of manner and speech which they were resolved, individually, to attain unto, and finding themselves always met with the simple directness which flowed naturally from a sincere, earnest soul, they were disappointed. They never once perceived those fine but inexorable inner ideals of deed and word and thought which distinguish the true patrician from the hopeless plebeian. There was always the attempt, on the part of certain Philistine leaders of the church, to penetrate and lay waste that inner citadel of silent personality, which the man of gentle blood and gentle breeding always instinctively reserves to himself, except as some appeal from distress and grief calls him forth, with soul laid bare, to put his heart close against another wounded human heart, well-born or ill-born, who calls to him for sympathy.

All these delicacies of temperament were lost on the larger part of the parish. Especially were they meaningless to the so-called "leaders" in the church; and while here and there among the humbler people there were many who saw and felt the high quality of their pastor's counsel and sympathy, to the majority he was unknown; and some suspected that he was really and secretly "stuck up," while others thought him somewhat "ordinary," and lost all interest in him. In the company of a man like Mr. Marshall, even though he was emphatic, loud voiced, and possessed of no general "book-learning," the minister always felt great freedom; for little as the bluff mill-owner knew about the drawing-room code or the conventionalities of visiting cards,

there was a true instinct in him and a quickness of perception, backed by a warm heart, which prevented him from being vulgar and made him a congenial companion; whereas, the members of the Blaney family, who always kept a "don't book," for ready reference, and had a cousin who had married a French count — they always threw Mr. Freeman into a posture of defence, as they approached him; and all his strength of Christian grace was needed, to keep him just and sympathetic toward them.

Thus the relations between Mr. Freeman and Emmanuel Church had never been as harmonious and intimate as had been those between him and the little mission church to which he had formerly ministered; and these inharmonious relations were daily growing more strained. Mrs. Freeman was more clearly conscious of the widening breach than was her husband. There was in him so much love for his flock, such an outpouring of goodwill toward them, that he could not see, impartially, the veiled ill-will or the covert antagonism which manifested itself more and more openly. But Mrs. Freeman caught a whisper, now and then, which was not intended for her ears, or translated a glance from some ingenuous child's face, which she knew was reflected from the fault-finding, imbittered family life in which that child dwelt; and, putting one thing with another, Mrs. Freeman felt her heart growing heavier, and wondered what would be the outcome.

Matters were in this condition, at the time of the annual meeting. The conclusions and decisions of the trustees needed, theoretically, to be laid before the open parish, and this was done; but it was an entirely formal procedure; not a soul in that promiscuous assemblage would have dared to amend or suggest anything. No, the main interest, at that meeting, centred in the vari-

ous "activities" of the parish; the various societies and clubs and leagues gathered to hear their doings for the year extolled and glorified. If sifted down, most of the work done was only a part of the general struggle to raise money to keep the church from falling behind in its finances; there were sales and suppers, concerts and lectures, sociables and teas, dramatic entertainments and charade parties — all aiming to beguile money from guarded and reluctant pockets; but this unpleasant commercial side showed but slightly, at the annual parish meeting, in the very brief report of its treasurer. It was the secretary of each of these minor societies and leagues who shone most illuminatingly; and when such a one, equipped with a few facts and a resplendent power of verbiage, read her glorified version of the "good work" done in her department, you would hardly have recognized the hard lines of poverty beneath those graceful curves of conventional phraseology; you would hardly have made out the meagre, shrunken carcass of unpleasant fact, under that flowing drapery of pleasing rhetoric.

One Monday morning, a few weeks after the annual meeting, when the society, like a leaky ship, had been patched up for the doubtful voyage of another year, the door-bell of the parsonage rang vigorously. The maid admitted Mr. Blaney, and notified her mistress. The hour was an early one, and Mr. Freeman, exhausted by his Sunday's work, having slept but little up to midnight, had prolonged his morning's sleep and was now eating a rather late breakfast. Accordingly, his wife — always loving and loyal, but not easily concealing her personal social preferences, or caring to — came into the parlor, to act, if possible, in place of her husband. She found her suave visitor examining critically a threadbare place in the old carpet (bought

by the Dorcas Society, at a second-hand sale). She stood, in frigid silence, a few moments, allowing him to continue his investigations, unconscious of her presence. When he turned and saw her, he was in no wise disconcerted, holding himself to be a fractional part of the landlordship of the parsonage, and a partial owner of all its belongings.

"Good morning!" said he, briskly, forcing a facetiousness of manner, which rendered him even more unattractive than before. "How is madam this morning?" And he put out his hand, which was coolly taken. "And the pastor, how is he? Resting, I trust, after his Sunday's labor?"

There was always a familiarity about the man which was offensive to Mrs. Freeman, and it was doubly so this morning. Speaking as calmly as she could, she explained that her husband was at breakfast; then she pointedly awaited her visitor's errand.

"Ah, he is already up?" exclaimed Mr. Blaney, with feigned surprise. "And Monday morning? Why, he ought to rest all he can on Monday; that is the minister's day of rest, you know." And it seemed to please him to emit this time-honored axiom about the clerical life, notwithstanding he had himself come — as would a dozen other callers, before noon — to claim a part of this "day of rest" for his own purposes.

"I will call him," said the wife, rather mechanically, "if you will excuse me." And she added, not without a touch of irony, "You can doubtless find something to occupy yourself with, for a few moments more."

This little thrust was lost on Mr. Blaney, whose mind was always so full of its own budding fancies, and his glib tongue so eager to express them, that he rarely gave close attention to the ideas or feelings of other people.

When Mr. Freeman came in, his visitor greeted him with a voluble effusiveness which betokened ill; and the tired minister took a renewed grasp of his jaded nerves, in anticipation of any hard strain which might come to them. After a few moments of random conversation, Mr. Blaney gave a preliminary ahem and said, "I called to see you this morning to — to — not in any official capacity, but as a friend — simply as a friend — to talk over with you the somewhat — er — somewhat involved and — er — burdensome condition of the finances of the parish."

"Yes," responded Mr. Freeman, with brevity.

"Of course you cannot be wholly unaware," said Mr. Blaney, looking out of the window, "even absorbed as you are in the — in the — er — spiritual interests of your flock, that — that the temporal affairs of the parish are — are becoming somewhat a matter of anxiety — of anxiety — to —" He was about to say "to the parish committee," but that would be showing his hand too openly; so he said, "to the parish in general."

"I am not in ignorance of the matter," responded the minister, calmly, and looking directly at Mr. Blaney.

"Yes, of course," continued the visitor; and his voice now took on an oily tone of flattery. "We all know how earnestly you labor in the vineyard, my dear pastor. We have never had a minister who was more consecrated."

"You have had a great many," interrupted Mr. Freeman, dryly; and Mr. Blaney was surprised and puzzled at the remark. He fidgeted for a moment, but Mr. Freeman did not help him out.

"Well, this is a hard world," he presently volunteered. "And facts are difficult things to deal with;

this fact of our shortage in our receipts, for example. I merely thought that — that I would come and talk it over with you, in a friendly way, and together — we might — er — think of some — er — remedy."

Mr. Freeman looked continuously at his visitor's face, but rarely caught his direct gaze. Despite Mr. Blaney's frequent boast that he was not "thin skinned," he really was. He was naturally a sensitive person; but he had scarified his sensibilities by repeated meannesses, had been guilty often of despicable deeds; and the results showed in his face and manner, as they do not show in a man equally mean but more stolid. So he pushed nervously on, in his errand, and fancied himself an intrepid leader of men, which he never could be; he had become only an errand-boy for real leaders.

"Now as to this matter of —" (he was about to say "retrenchment," but he changed it to "policy") "— I thought you might have something to suggest; I —"

Mr. Freeman quietly interrupted, "If you remember, Mr. Blaney, when I came to this parish, it was you yourself who informed me that I was not to 'meddle' — as you expressed it — with the business affairs of the church, but give my attention solely to its spiritual concerns."

This was true. It is what is nearly always said or implied to every newly-installed minister, and yet every one who really knows about the working of a sordidly managed parish, like the one I am describing, knows that, despite this lofty "hands off" to the new pastor, the worth of his work is sooner or later judged by the size of his congregations, and his value is measured by the treasurer's receipts. Still, the pleasant fiction is kept up, and such a minister, who probably knows more about every side of the church life, financial and spiritual, than does anybody else in it, is often compelled to

remain silent, when he sees impossible methods pursued, and is forced to stay his hand when he groans inwardly over the mismanagement of officials who give but little close study to the church's problems.

At first Mr. Freeman had rebelled against this condition of things, but, after one or two vain attempts to meet the new problems of the day with new yet dignified measures, he had given the matter up. Emmanuel Church, like most churches, had long ago settled into the axiomatic belief that a minister of the gospel could not know anything about what they called the "business end" of his parish. Therefore, as Mr. Blaney seemed to have the financial interests of the society in his mind, the minister waited patiently for him to complete his errand.

"I am aware," said the visitor, "that the pastor of our church has never been troubled with its business responsibilities, and that is as it should be; but — but in this case — well, you see, this is different; this is an exceptional state of affairs. We are running behind every day."

"Yes," assented the pastor, quietly.

"And we must do — something must be done about it."

He was really becoming confused — was the self-confident man. Mr. Freeman did not help him out, nor did he relax an atom from a certain lofty dignity which somewhat baffled his visitor. If positions had been reversed, Mr. Blaney, as pastor, would have been fluent and fertile in explanations and apologies; but now — well, Mr. Blaney saw that he must say it all, unsupported; and he began to lose his temper, which was of a very irritable sort.

"Of course, you can preach as you like; but I don't mind saying to you that our people like practical sub-

jects. They don't care to listen to vague discourses 'way up in the air."

This meant, as the preacher knew, his recent course of sermons on "the relations of the individual to the community." But he held his peace, and forced Mr. Blaney to go on. "Now there was Mr. Snelling, your predecessor; he always kept right close to practical things, and he pleased everybody."

It was hard — this interview; it was hard to sit, in Christian patience, and hear such low standards advocated; but Mr. Freeman had fought long to master his own tongue, and usually, now, could speak, or keep silence, as he wished. In this case, he ventured the reminder that his predecessor had often been accused of dealing too plainly with certain unpleasant and commonly tabooed subjects in the pulpit. The difficult path which many preachers of to-day must follow is this. They must preach what people call "practical sermons," but they must say nothing that disturbs their listeners' ease of mind. Many a preacher is allowed to talk about the affairs of everyday life, but on condition that he shall not even hint that the persons before him fall in the least degree short of perfection. He must inveigh vigorously against "sin," but must say nothing about the real daily sins of the people who are in the pews.

Mr. Blaney listened, without any especial sign of emotion, even of interest; and the minister — who partly regretted having stooped enough to attempt to reason with the man — saw that he cared nothing for the truth of the matter, but had come with a distinct purpose, and his real attention was absorbed in that. So, relapsing again into cool, courteous silence, Mr. Freeman awaited what might come. He saw how little it availed to attempt explanations of his own difficult position. Indeed, in his heart, and in his talks with his wife, he

recognized the hard, underlying ground of disaffection and opposition, which was, not the subjects of his sermons, but the smallness of the congregation, the paucity of the church revenues. In this commercial age, it is true of an "Emmanuel Church" and of many — not all — churches, that a preacher may speak or act as he likes, in the pulpit, if only he draws a crowd to hear him; if the crowd comes, and pays liberally to be entertained, the "pillars" will condone all defects, wink at all extravagances, and leave the preacher alone in his nondescript "success." But so soon as the public interest flags, critics spring up, throughout all classes in such a church, who feel competent to instruct the preacher, and to demonstrate that he is not a competent man.

Presently, the visitor, after beating about the bush for several minutes, came to the real gist of his errand. "There has been considerable talk, Mr. Freeman, about the best way to cut down our expenses. Times are rather hard, and interest rates are dropping, and some of our leading people have passed on, and many of our young people have married and moved away, and — and — " He paused, and screwed up his mean face to finish the sentence. Mr. Freeman knew perfectly well what was coming. He rose from his seat. "Mr. Blaney," he said with a force and weight which his visitor had never before suspected, under his usual restrained manner, "you need not say any more. I think there is no need to prolong this unpleasant interview. I have much to do to-day, and you also doubtless have use for your time. I shall ask you to excuse me from further conversation." And he arose and deliberately led the way toward the door.

Mr. Blaney was disconcerted. This was a kind of situation which he was not competent to meet; it had

risen to too high a level. He, therefore, cleared his throat, forced a faint laugh, reached mechanically for his hat, and followed the other to the hall. There he tried to say something facetious, and failed; he put out his hand, and had it coolly ignored. And he went nervously and awkwardly down the steps.

Mr. Freeman's unusual manner and conduct were not the sudden inspiration of that brief interview. They were the outcome of many annoyed, anxious hours and nights of reflection and of counsel with his wife. He saw perfectly what the result must soon be, and he had taken his resolution; there only remained, now, the deciding upon the exact time when he would openly announce it. Having, therefore, settled upon his course of action, having already decided to resign his position as pastor of Emmanuel Church, there had already arisen in his heart a feeling of separation from it. His sympathies, which had gone out so freely and warmly before, now withdrew themselves; and he was calmly resolved to consider anew his relation to the world, and to readjust himself afresh to its needs and its opportunities. So that this unexpected coolness toward Mr. Blaney was not a spasmodic outcome of that one interview, but a frank open expression of that abhorrence for the man, which the minister had long felt, but had earnestly, though vainly, tried to overcome.

CHAPTER III

POWERS BEHIND THE THRONE

"Woman's power is for rule, not for battle; and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering arrangement and decision." — JOHN RUSKIN.

THUS matters rested in Emmanuel Church for several weeks. Mr. Blaney did not care to describe exactly what had happened at his interview with his pastor; but he expressed to Dr. Mixer his confident belief, with a wink and a chuckle, that "the parson was going to get out before long." And the twain awaited developments.

There was, however, another half, and more than a half, of the life and force of the parish, which has not yet been properly described, — and that was the female portion. Not enjoying the club advantages and luxuries of the numberless "orders" and "lodges," which met the social hunger of their husbands and brothers and sons, the women of the parish made the church, with its parlors, their club. Consequently, it meant far more to them than it did to the men. The men stood in the forefront and appeared to represent and control the parish, but the women held the real power. So, while the men turned aside, for a brief hour or two, from their habitual paths of money-making or power-getting, to consider the affairs of the church, the women bore its needs continually in mind; and these pressing

problems of church expenses and the ingenious devising of "ways and means" were always before them. Many of them felt the problems as a burden; but many others secretly rejoiced in the semi-mercantile life which these needs opened, as larger than the kitchen life which chronically encompassed them. And many, too, were happy in manipulating the five- and ten-dollar bills involved, inasmuch as their household life rarely brought them in contact with any larger sum than a few half dollars, reluctantly yielded to them by husbands who readily signed checks of twenty or fifty dollars, for "extras" at the club, or for "dues" to the "Knights of" this, or the "Grand Templars of" that.

So the camp of the women-folk was much stirred, and there was considerable fluttering and tea-drinking, and general agreement of opinion that something must be done. That "something," of course, in a church, meant a fair, a sale, a bazaar;—call it by what name you will, its odor is the same. Now the men-folk really detested fairs; for these stirred up households which husbands wished quiet. And a fair, when once under way, when once planted and grown, and in full, brief blossom, like a century plant, exacted a certain amount of notice; it could not be wholly ignored;—the men must take an evening from their other pressing engagements and attend. Moreover, the women-folk, at such time, backed by the proud sense of efficient effort and laudable results, outside the kitchen, often took on a resolute and assertive air, which seemed to many husbands a dangerous symptom. So, as a rule, the men disliked and distrusted fairs.

The women, however, liked them. Of course there was always a number of women who protested ostentatiously that they could not bear them, and that they would not "lift a finger"; but even these duplex crea-

tures really in their hearts were not averse to the pleasing activity involved, and frequently might be seen "lifting," not only "a finger," but both hands and both feet and their voices as well, in the excitement of "the cause."

So it was decided that the women of the parish would hold a fair. By whom the decision was reached it would be hard to say; but, somehow, this settled, as a conviction, in all female hearts. As for holding a formal meeting, in proper parliamentary fashion, with a chairman and "motions" and yeas and nays — that was beyond the range of most women in the society; although a few of the younger ones sometimes timidly expressed a preference for that orderly kind of procedure. So the women-folk met — notice being duly given from the pulpit — under the name of the Dorcas Society; and when two women had arrived, at that moment the meeting began. As others came in, they joined informally in the talk, and the "meeting" thus grew to dimensions commensurate with the importance of the cause which drew them together. The shriller talkers held the floor. Fluent as all these good folk were in private, informal talk, the moment that there was any approach to a formal speech, or the need of it, their tongues all clave to the roofs of their mouths. So that when the president, "Sister" Jennings, a mild, jelly-fish sort of woman, — after being repeatedly prodded by "Sister" Moulton's umbrella, — banged weakly and then more boldly on the table, with her tin spectacle-case; the tumult slowly subsided until there was comparative calm. Not waiting for entire quiet, — which would have frightened her into a state of dumb dignity, — Sister Jennings said, as loudly as she could, "I think we — ought to have — a — fair." Then fifty bonneted heads nodded vigorously, and about forty-five throats emitted an "m! — m!" and the thing

was done; the seed was planted, and forthwith began to grow.

Any stranger who had glanced over that assemblage of women might have seen them as one class — fifty individuals — unstratified, homogeneous soil in the vineyard of the Lord. But such an observer, reaching such a conclusion, would have made a great mistake. Be it known, and here recorded, that there is no soil of ancient Latin cities, trodden under the feet of centuries of civilization, that will show more strata than will the soil of a half-dead church, the social structure of a decaying parish!

Therefore it was an unhappy mistake which Mrs. Train made, when the question of a "Chairman of Committees" for the fair came up. The meeting simmered and boiled, and stewed and steamed, and, after a while, certain things came to the top, and the president skimmed them off. A half dozen names and suggestions were floating there, and Mrs Jennings, in her confusion, skimmed the wrong ones; for instance, misled by Mrs. Train's determined voice, she announced that Sister Bellaire would be a good chairman.

Mrs. Train was a newcomer in the parish, and had not yet "located" the various strata therein embedded; and, deducing too hastily from Mrs. Bellaire's fine equipage, and her grand way of sweeping down the middle aisle on Sunday, that she was a person of importance in parish affairs, Mrs. Train had resolved to score one for herself, in Mrs. Bellaire's affections, by thus paying her honor. Ah, little did Mrs. Train know the "wheels within wheels" which revolved and buzzed and whirred inside that machine, social and ecclesiastical. Why, Mrs. Bellaire could no more have made that fair a success than could some Sioux squaw from the Western Plains. Not that she lacked intelligence or energy; but she

simply would have found nobody willing to serve on the various sub-committees, which it was the chairman's duty to appoint. Mrs. Train, being a newcomer, did not know that Mrs. Bellaire was struggling hard to get near the top of the social pyramid, but as yet had not "arrived." Mrs. Bellaire was the wife of a now prosperous plumber, who formerly himself had tinkered and soldered water-pipes, and dug up drains; people near the "apex" do not easily consent to overlook that. Some of them could actually remember seeing his feet and legs sticking out from under their kitchen sink, as he stopped leaks. Now he was well-to-do, and had a library, and bought all those sets of subscription books which nobody reads, and kept good horses, etc. Mrs. Bellaire, too, had risen with him. She was possessed of tact and cleverness, but was a little too aggressive; tried to take the social fortress by storm; walked boldly up to the entrance and the portcullis gate, and defied all within (ought to have bowed her head and tried one of the lower-arched postern-gates); then tried, so to speak, to build a fortress of her own, in full sight of that other one, but with no success. It was a creditable structure, but everybody knew (and she knew) that it was not "the fortress," with really old moss on it, and the dents and scars of past sieges, disfiguring its walls.

No, handsome, well-dressed Mrs. Bellaire might hold her head as erect as she chose, sitting in her carriage, or walking down the front aisle; but she was "outside," and knew it, and fought against it, and never confessed it, even to herself. All this was unknown to Mrs. Train, but is known to you and me, reader, if we have seen much of social life in republican America, where caste lines are as clearly defined as anywhere amid the "effete monarchies of Europe." A person, as penetrating as yourself, would not have needed to live in

the social life of Emmanuel Church six months to see that it was composed of several layers, one overlying another, some of them visible, others invisible, to the casual eye, but clinging together like the tenacious layers of a tree-trunk. Each layer held fast to the layer within, and would have been glad to shake off the layer without. And who, pray, was at the heart of this tree? Who was really "inside," and could dictate to all others, with little fear of disobedience? Who, indeed, but Miss Leonora Metcalf — an elderly, snowy-haired spinster, of striking personal appearance, with a keen knowledge of affairs social, with a power of quiet management which would have made her a governor if her sex had permitted it, and with great tact toward men, — whom she secretly adored, and openly but skilfully flattered. She had a very sound backing of three generations of lawyers, all natives and life-long residents of the town; and it was distinctly understood, and tacitly admitted, that Miss Metcalf stood first in all society matters. A word of commendation from her gladdened the heart of the recipient; and her disapproval withered the soul that felt its touch.

So there was really only one way in which to make the fair a success, only one end by which the snarl could be unravelled; and the president of the Dorcas Society, Mrs. Jennings, knew this perfectly well, so soon as she could collect her wits; and she let the humming and buzzing go on for several minutes more, then banged on the desk and announced that the meeting was dissolved, and that it would meet again the week following. She said that several preliminary matters needed to be attended to; and most persons present knew that she meant that all that was now needed was — the approval of Miss Metcalf. With that person enlisted, either as chairman or in silent conjunction with some figurehead

named by her, all would go well; committees would easily be filled, and the only contention would be when one layer of the social tree tried to merge itself in the more select layer next inside.

Thus the work of the Lord's vineyard went forward. Miss Metcalf consented to accept the office of Chairman of Committees. Just how she was appointed nobody could say; but, at the next meeting of the Dorcas Society, a full list of committees was read, and nobody dared to murmur a word of opposition. All recognized the Metcalf touch, and knew that it was a skilled one. Mrs. Jennings read the list; but while the hands were those of Esau, the voice was that of Jacob.

Naturally, when so many "workers in the vineyard" met, the opportunity thus given for discussion of church affairs was not neglected. As the meeting dissolved, and the number was reduced to a half dozen, expressions of opinion became freer and freer, concerning the financial condition of the church and its causes and remedies. At this point Miss Metcalf sauntered in. Times and seasons were as nothing to her. She created her own external conditions; as a young woman she had not been able to do this. Nature had given her large black eyes but a rather shapeless face; so that from girlhood she had become used to the experience — so unwelcome to a woman — of seeing men's eyes resting coolly upon her, with never a sign of admiration, with mere recognition of her occupancy of space. But Nature had another card yet to play, and played it when Miss Metcalf was over forty; for then her dark, coarse hair turned rapidly white, and, being abundant, was combed and coiled into dignity and grandeur by its owner's skilful hands; and men now saw that she was beautiful; and the black eyes below the snowy terraces played like batteries intrenched in winter quarters.

So Miss Metcalf had great power in the parish, and whenever she spoke, quietly, almost timidly, — knowing well that woman's greatest strength is her apparent weakness, — all listened, men and women. Therefore it was an absolute necessity that a full account of proceedings should be submitted to her; and, after this was done, conversation turned naturally into a plain discussion of the causes which made the fair a necessity. At first there was some caution shown, in the various opinions that were given; but soon most of the women threw off all reserve, and "the axe was laid" boldly, at what they considered the "root of the tree." Said one thin-faced woman — whose husband made a great deal of money from bad mortgages and promptly transferred it all to his wife — said she, severely: "For one, I think Mr. Freeman's salary might have been cut down, the first thing. I believe in cutting your garment according to your cloth; and if we hain't got the money, why, we hain't. And I guess if he wa'n't so lofty about taking money from funerals, and if he would condescend" (with great scorn) "to accept reg'lar minister's discount at the stores, like other ministers, he would have plenty to live on, and not go without butter on his bread either."

There was only one person present who could understand, in the slightest degree, the high motives, the sensitive repugnance in Mr. Freeman's nature, which was the sole explanation of his thus condemned conduct.

That person was Mrs. Adeline Guthrie, a woman of perhaps twenty-four or five, the widow of the late Rev. Jared Guthrie, D.D., who had been a learned member of learned linguistic societies, and had died six months before, leaving his extremely youthful widow — formerly his ward — with a comfortable property in real estate and government bonds. As you looked at the graceful, rounded figure, and piquant, oval face of said Mrs. Guth-

rie, you might find it difficult to see in her the typical "bereft widow"; but her black serge gown was in evidence, likewise her close-fitting black bonnet, with its white ruche, and long, funereal black veil falling down the back. The very unexpectedness of finding so fresh and youthful a face inside this sombre head-dress brought out the large, black eyes and the pink tints in the round cheeks most charmingly. There was a cameo-like effect, and a quiet air of poise and distinction, which always brought her into notice. Besides, there was hardly a trace of suffering discoverable in the features, but rather a touch of mischief in the eyes, and a resolute self-reliant quality about the mouth and chin, which bewildered and fascinated. Mrs. Guthrie's relations to her dry-as-dust old guardian and husband had been meagre — just how meagre the curious world never knew; enough that he had cared for her faithfully after his old college friend, her father, had died and left him this charge. And she, in turn, as wife, had repaid his care, with gratitude, and had ministered to him tenderly in his last illness.

However, Mrs. Adeline Guthrie, widow, was now free, yet with a freedom which had limitations. She was legally and socially a widow, but she had hardly known what young maidenhood was like; from a prolonged and simple uneventful childhood, she had now come forth suddenly into the atmosphere of adult life; and she met that life and its demands with a little unconscious protest of heart. She longed to enter upon its fêtes and gayeties, as a fresh young girl who had never known their joys or their disappointments; but she was no longer a "young girl"; so the world said to her in various ways — said it as sternly as the world can say anything to a pretty, attractive young woman.

Mrs. Guthrie knew, partly by experience, and more by hearsay, the aspirations and the disappointments of the

life clerical. She was aware of the best of a minister's experience, and the worst of it. She had kept her nimble tongue under bridle for several years, and now considerably enjoyed the independence of her position. She was often called "odd," but her clear mind and her fearless heart gave her a unique position in the church. People seemed to allow her far more latitude, in dress and manners and speech, than was accorded to any one else; if she overstepped any of the unwritten laws of her provincial surroundings, people smiled and said, "Oh, it's Mrs. Guthrie, you know." And yet, under their outer manner of apparent indulgence toward personal idiosyncrasies, there lurked a timid suspicion that perhaps Mrs. Guthrie — who had "travelled abroad" and had seen more of the world than had any of them — had some higher authority, to them unknown, for her variations from their standards.

Mrs. Guthrie might then and there have made exposition, intelligently and impartially, of Mr. Freeman's high motives for his apparent disregard of dollars and cents; but she knew her audience, and knew that her words would be wasted. There are ears that cannot hear; the mammon-worshipper can understand only the speech that has a metallic ring in it. So Mrs. Guthrie's black eyes snapped, and the pink in her round cheeks deepened, but her sensitive face remained immovable.

"It seems to me," began an elderly woman in gold spectacles, speaking with a thick utterance and a torpid deliberation, "that our pastor has failed to draw good audiences, largely because the people can't hear him. What good does it do to get ready a good sermon, if a preacher can't make himself heard? Now, if somebody would tell Mr. Freeman to shave off his mustache, it would be a real kindness; I think —"

"Why don't you tell him yourself?" suggested

Mrs. Guthrie, in a clear, ringing, cheerful voice, but with mischief lurking in her eyes.

The elderly woman stammered. She was slow in thought as in speech. "I — I have almost said as much to him; that is, I have told him, repeatedly, that the people at the back of the church couldn't hear him."

"I can hear him," said Mrs. Guthrie, "and I sit two pews behind you."

The elderly woman subsided, not from a sense of dialectic defeat, but from mental shock. The fact was — as Mrs. Guthrie knew — that the worthy creature was growing deaf, but was quite unaware of it. The spirited young widow happened to know, also, that on one of the occasions when the elderly woman had complained to the minister, he had mildly suggested her taking a pew nearer the pulpit — a suggestion which was received with surprise and even horror; for all her family traditions regarding Emmanuel Church twined around that old pew, and attendance in any other pew would have been unbearable to her. So Mr. Freeman had added, soothingly, that he would try to speak a little louder; and he really did so; but he resolutely refused to shout his sermon at those and other deaf ears, being aware, as is every public speaker, that by doing so he must use harsh tones, which would inevitably weary and wound the ears of the average listener.

"For my part, I think our minister ain't loyal enough to our denomination;" declared another woman, in quavering voice, shrinking behind Miss Metcalf, as she spoke. "He actually told me, a week ago, that he thought it might sometime be advisable to combine Emmanuel Church with All Saints Church. Now I call that not only lukewarm but disloyal." One or two bonnets nodded approvingly, and nobody replied in words. Again Mrs. Guthrie could have made fitting answer,

had she chosen. She would have so chosen, six months before; but now she saw that nothing was to be gained for Mr. Freeman — loyal as she was to him — by logical discussion. She was fully aware that two of the very women, who nodded their heads in approval of this speech of condemnation, had been enthusiastic about the sermon of their pastor's, a month before, upon the text, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." In that sermon Mr. Freeman had portrayed — not eloquently, but clearly and earnestly — the advantages, economic and moral and spiritual, of a greater unity of the branches of the Christian church. He had dealt with the theme in a general way, and these people had approved; but later, when he uttered one word which looked like giving up Emmanuel Church, they drew back in consternation and protest. Like most members of Christian sects, they believed in a kind of "Christian unity" which would bring other churches into their fold; but any suggestion of the reverse process was promptly dubbed "disloyalty." Yet it must be conceded that there was a commendable element in this attitude; Mr. Freeman knew that. He understood and valued the emotion of constancy and local fidelity which underlay it; he simply regretted the narrow range of ecclesiastical sympathy which made the smaller loyalty unable to merge itself in the larger.

Thus the conversation went on, in a desultory fashion. Another woman thought Mr. Freeman was "stuck up"; he had passed her, twice, on the street, when she had just "run out" to the store, in her house dress, and he had not spoken to her. This peevish remark made Mrs. Guthrie's lip curl with scorn, knowing as she did the broad, simple, unspoiled nature of her rather absent-minded minister. Then one woman ventured to say that not so many people had "united with the church" during the past few months as formerly.

But another woman here added that although there was a smaller total, the number of men had been greater. This was undeniably an agreeable fact, but was received with reluctant silence and with no attempt to explain it, significant as it was, with reference to the wholesome, manly quality of Freeman.

Thus far Miss Metcalf had not spoken; nor did she now. If she had openly added any counts to the indictment being brought against Mr. Freeman, they would not have been her real grounds of enmity. The real reason why she was not a warm supporter of her pastor was that he did not give her that deference which she demanded. He did not recognize any social superiority on her part, and refused to become her satellite, or the tool of any faction. Therefore, Miss Metcalf was quietly resolved that Mr. Freeman should not occupy the pulpit of Emmanuel Church any longer than was demanded by dignity and decency.

However, she was too good a tactician to let her hand appear openly in the removal. Instead, she quietly worked through the masculine forces of the parish. She cultivated Mr. Blaney! She lingered long in conversation with Dr. Mixer, over his counter, as she visited his store to inquire about patent medicine which she cared nothing for, and to buy pills which she would never use. Everywhere she dropped sentences, or questions, or exclamations of surprise, which seemed innocent enough on the outside, but carried venom, concealed, for Mr. Freeman. The fair gave her exceptionally good occasions for this course of conduct; because it brought her into contact with many people whom she ordinarily would not have met. And while, apparently, she was simply an earnest worker in the rebuilding of the walls of Zion, she was really the arch-conspirator against the captain of the citadel.

CHAPTER IV

DANCING (AND DINING) TO THE LORD

"The show is not the show,
But they that go,
Menagerie to me
My neighbor be."

—EMILY DICKINSON.

CERTAIN of the Christian poets and preachers have had something to say about the sacredness of even the most menial tasks; and they have insisted that he who shod a horse, in the right spirit, or she who swept a room, with devout purpose, was engaging in prayer and worship. This interpretation of religious principles may have some basis of reason, so far as acts of work and duty are concerned; but when the theory is pushed over into the field of play and pleasure, there arises a serious distrust of its soundness. Nevertheless, it is often pushed into that field, and if the lessons of certain extravagances in ancient history could be forgotten, and this theory of pious pleasuring be judged by its financial results solely, there would be much to commend it.

However, a modern church, of the commercial type which I am portraying, when struggling in competition with other churches and social clubs, can hardly be expected to give much time to ancient history; and many a modern minister has little time to review the gross excesses of those earlier Protestant sects, which ran into such riotous sensual indulgence, in the name of religious freedom and under the supposed sanction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it comes about, alas, that a

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church, which will cast its approving mantle of respectability over almost any kind of amusement and entertainment, can gain added patronage for that form of pleasure seeking, and enlarge its income in a very appreciable degree. Thus, developing more and more, through several years, Emmanuel Church each year held a "Festival," so called, which comprised a large and varied assortment of shows and sales, into whose service every possible member of the society was drafted. The fair now in process of growth was merged in this annual "Festival," the date being altered to accommodate the desired change; and the usual methods of procedure went gayly forward. Everybody was boldly "solicited" for contributions of food, fancy articles, decorations, novelties in dress, and money.

Mr. Freeman had passed through this Saturnalia before, and his refined nature rebelled at its gross appeals to the lower motives of human hearts. He loathed the part which he was expected to take in it; he resented the reading from the pulpit of long advertisements of its needs and aims. These "notices" were usually written out by the fertile Mr. Blaney, and abounded in eloquent appeals for turkey, and ham, and pickles, preserves, and similar necessaries of life. The reading of these notices, Sunday after Sunday, seemed to the minister like a profanation of the pulpit. They called upon all "faithful workers in the cause" to "stand firmly at their posts," and to "rally about their various chairmen of committees," and to "make a grand success of this great effort."

This annual orgy reversed, for a time, the regular order of church precedent and parochial dignity. Many of the people who were always most faithful in their attendance at public service, and gave strongest support by their presence and sympathy, were temporarily set

aside; and people came to the front who rarely were seen inside the church doors, and individuals took on a brief but unquestioned authority, who hardly knew the minister by sight. Out of hidden corners of the parish they arose — being summoned by the administrative genius of Miss Metcalf and Dr. Mixer — and put into the enterprise the same commercial spirit and methods that make successful a department store.

This annual "Festival" also resembled the Roman Saturnalia in one marked respect; namely, that it was expected to obliterate, for the time, all the usual social distinctions and bonds of caste. Here Miss Metcalf's skilful hand achieved its finest results; she knew all the strata of the parish, and well understood how to arrange the committees so that claimants for social recognition should be encouraged, — though not wholly satisfied, — and the possessors of society prestige should be made useful in holding subordinates to the more unpleasant duties. Certain artful combinations of "family" and "beauty" with "wealth" were made for the flower booth — that position being the very acme of honor in the festival. Then, too, the kitchen work was cleverly put in charge of a "social leader," who did little except enroll a large and efficient corps of aids, and then bustle about with a note-book, and with a very dainty apron which was worth at least five dollars, and came through the festival (as twice before) like the garments of the Three Worthies through the fiery furnace, "without smell of fire" — or food — "upon it."

Yes; quick, watchful, calculating, determined Miss Metcalf did indeed show great skill in combining her forces effectively. She showed herself possessed of a keen knowledge of "compatibles," as the pharmacists say, which was worthy of admiration. She smiled on women whom she had coolly ignored, throughout the year,

and she flattered men whose horse-laughs and bar-room manners almost nauseated her. Even the children were expected to do their part in this great festival; and Miss Metcalf invited them, — by delicately perfumed notes to their mothers, — and then calmly saw them drilled in complicated dances, at great cost to their poor little nerves, through long and late hours when they should have been in bed and asleep. Not even Bonaparte, conscripting among younger and ever younger ages of the empire's male subjects, was more remorseless than this pale, snow-crowned spinster of uncertain age.

There were several features of the festival which Mr. Freeman especially regretted. One of these was the soliciting of advertisements for the *Mayflower*, a little pamphlet-publication, edited and managed by Mr. Blaney. In this field of fugitive literature the prolific mind of this gentleman found great freedom and joy of expression. He did not ply the scissors as vigorously as editors of such sheets are accustomed to do, but he drew on his own fertile brain. And if only he had possessed the power of selection, and could have controlled his vanity enough to discard poorer material and use the better kinds, he would have produced a very creditable little pamphlet; but he printed everything that would run off from his pen. His enthroned judgment had not the courage to "decline with thanks" any skit, however feeble, which his airy fancy offered; and the result was that rather clever bits of satire stood, ashamed, beside maudlin "personals" and "local hits"; and a quatrain of really smooth verse jostled against some crude, coarse witticism. Of course, the *Mayflower* was not to waste its sweetness on the festival air; it was by no means its own excuse for being. It was expected to add materially to the receipts from the festival; and this it did by means of its advertisements.

A half dozen of the most attractive young girls of the society were appointed "a committee to solicit advertisements"; and forth they went, through the offices and shops of the city, asking proprietors of all kinds of business to take space in the advertising pages of the *Mayflower*. In most cases they were treated civilly; but here and there they were received with rude rebuffs, and occasionally they met glances and greetings which were free and familiar, and even more and worse than this, — if they, dear, innocent children, had really known what it all meant.

Mr. Freeman was aware of this mode of gaining money, and was very uneasy about it; but, in view of his impending retirement from his pastorate, he deemed it best to say nothing. One day, however, Mr. Blaney stopped him on the street, and, with his habitual tactless jocularity, which always irritated a delicate nature like the minister's, he extracted a note-book from his pocket and invited Mr. Freeman to "see and assure himself of the sources of his next month's salary." Then he exhibited a list of the "ads" which were already arranged for; and, as Mr. Freeman ran his eye over the list, — being somewhat puzzled at Mr. Blaney's conduct in submitting them to him, — he suddenly saw an explanation of the thing, in one of the names on the list. It was the name of a restaurant-keeper whose place of business was of a very shady character; the place had been raided twice for liquors, and there were supper rooms connected with the house which had long held an unsavory notoriety. Mr. Freeman knew Mr. Blaney's cunning ways, and knew at once that the unscrupulous editor of the *Mayflower* aimed at gaining his approval of the list in general and of this disreputable advertisement in particular. Therefore he paused and deliberated; and as they thus stood together, Mr. Pidge

came up, walking with those short, mincing paces which such small natures often find suited to their petty mental processes.

Mr. Freeman was reluctant to oppose the acceptance of the advertisement, but he knew that if he did not, he would be openly and triumphantly quoted by Mr. Blaney as having approved its admission. So he asked if it seemed best to Mr. Blaney to allow that name to appear in the *Mayflower*.

Mr. Blaney was shrewd enough to try and throw the burden of proof on his minister; and his face took on a bewildered expression, as he asked, with assumed innocence: "Why not? Why could there be any objection to the name? Wasn't the man's money as good as anybody's?" And then a wicked little gleam came into his eyes. "Surely the society needs every cent it can make; we have run behind dreadfully this year."

That was one of the man's merciless thrusts. He enjoyed giving them; but Mr. Freeman was fairly well seasoned to them, and, almost in calmness, he stood and conjectured how a man who had himself suffered as much pain as had Mr. Blaney, at the cruel hands of his fellows, could so invariably use every opportunity to give similar pains and pangs to another. But Mr. Blaney was both sensitive and malignant; he had that same reptile temperament which makes the Kaffir, in battle, when wounded and suffering, crawl over to a still more seriously wounded enemy, and weakly and feverishly stab him to death.

Mr. Freeman knew his man thoroughly, and knew poor, soulless, little Mr. Pidge, who stood a rather unwilling witness of the interview. So he hastily revolved the problem, and in a moment had taken his resolution. "I think I would not accept that restaurant advertisement," said he, firmly and unflinchingly, "because the

owner does not enjoy a very wholesome reputation in town. Personally, I know nothing against him; but everybody agrees that the place is not one where—"

Mr. Blaney interrupted him. He saw that the minister's judgment was decidedly against accepting the advertisement, and he was angry, yet pleased; angry at losing that amount of money, and pleased to be able to snarl as he now did, closing his book and turning to Mr. Pidge. "Well, there is such a thing as being too good to live; Heaven keep *me* from setting myself up as a judge of my neighbors. The good book tells us about a man who went up into the temple to pray, and thanked the Lord that he was not as other men were." A sardonic smile played over his mean face, and he turned again to Mr. Freeman and added, "Isn't that the scripture of it, pastor?"

It was all very insulting, and showed the extremely strained relations into which the minister had now come with at least this one of his parishioners. Mr. Freeman, deep in his heart, for one brief moment, would have given all he had in the world to strike the man to the ground, and grind him, serpent that he was, under his heel; but the throe of passion was quickly conquered. There was only a quick flash in the gray eyes and a reddening of the white scar on the temple, and then he bowed coldly, and, without reply, left the two men standing alone.

"Good, wasn't it?" chuckled Mr. Blaney, who had divined the intensity of wrath which he had so successfully aroused.

But Mr. Pidge remarked, nervously, as they moved slowly away: "Our pastor doesn't seem to be very lib'ral, now, does he? We was told when he come, that he was lib'ral and progressive; but he don't act like it. Now, what's the good, I say, of settin' up to

be lib'ral, and talkin' lib'ral, and then not keepin' up to it; that's what I say." And Mr. Pidge continued to say it, in one form or another, for several minutes, until at last the two parted at the corner of the street.

This catchword of "liberal," or "illiberal," was frequently on the lips of Mr. Freeman's parishioners, especially at such times as this of the festival; there were so many questions of good taste as well as of morality, wherein the minister's sense was finer than that of most of his flock, that many little collisions occurred.

There was the ever-recurring question of lotteries; in one or another disguise it came up repeatedly. "Guesses" and "chances" and "shows" — whatever the name — Mr. Freeman was quick and sincere enough to see the reality of the gambling element underneath; and he was considered, by even the best of his flock, to be "a little narrow" on this point.

Again he found himself utterly out of touch with many of the methods of trade which were popular at the festival. One of the devices which was productive of revenue was the "looking backward party," held one evening, where everybody came, dressed in garments which were put on "wrong side before." The effect was grotesque indeed; the attendance was large, but Mr. Freeman's soul revolted at taking part in such vulgar extravagances. And when he, at times, reflected upon the pious coloring which was thrown over all this buffoonery, because the receipts were to go into the church treasury, he wondered that the very stones did not cry out in protest.

The feature of this festival which brought out the full resources of the society, numerically and socially, was the "fancy dress banquet." No smaller word than "banquet" would express it. It was not called a "din-

ner" or a "supper." So insignificant a name as either of those might do for a group of college presidents, meeting and eating together, or for our Ambassador to Great Britain, entertaining a company of diplomats; but for a New England town, and for the famous festival, only the word "banquet" was adequate. So the "fancy dress banquet" was planned, and was pushed to a successful termination. A hall was hired, and the entire parish was distributed and assigned to the various duties of cooking and serving food. The affair was expected to furnish much merriment, and it did. Men and women, of all ages and conditions, arrayed themselves in cooks' garb and waiters' aprons; and amid much horse-play served the multitude of townspeople who flocked in. The attendance was large, and, to the uninitiated, might have seemed to indicate great good-fellowship among the various churches; but, on closer scrutiny, it would be found that the usual law of reciprocity, which rules on most of the levels of society, ruled here also; for careful note was silently made by many acute "members" as to who came and who did not. And a large part of the attendance was tacitly taken as payment for the attendance of Emmanuel Church members on various parties and sales and festivals held by other churches in the past.

Quite apart from this balancing of social debts, and beyond the really adequate gustatory reasons for attending the "banquet," there was a moderate return to be had for one's money, in the absurd sights which there presented themselves. If Mr. Freeman could have looked upon the scene impartially, impersonally, with no sense of responsibility for the coarseness of the situation, he would have found much to amuse him. There was Dr. Mixer, his rotund form enveloped in a vast apron, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, trying to cook

some oysters over a range in the corner; and there was Mr. Marshall, his honest face beaming with genuine delight, acting as waiter, with a woman's hat tied over his left ear. Mrs. Marshall, however, was too mindful of appearances to trust herself in an unbecoming garb, and appeared as a shepherdess, with a toy sheep under her arm and a gilded crook in her hand, — properties which made her somewhat inefficient, save for decorative purposes.

Taken all together, there was a flavor about the affair which savored humorously of an exhibition of trained animals. There were obese elephantine figures, and attenuated giraffe-like figures; and such men as Mr. Blaney and Mr. Pidge, when fully arrayed, and skipping gayly about, might serve well as suggestions of performing poodles. The especially unpleasant element in the affair was that several of the people came, in a body, to Mr. Freeman and asked him to take tickets and make change at the entrance of the hall; but he resolutely declined. And this was understood to be only another sign of his "illiberality." All sense of dignity and propriety seemed for the time laid aside by a majority of the parish — at least by those who had now arisen into temporary control of affairs. Mr. Freeman noted, however, with some satisfaction, that, temporarily excited as they were by the large receipts which were coming in, they could still halt at one extreme measure proposed by Mr. Blaney. This prolific individual had a sudden inspiration, or recollection of some previous festival or bazaar, and proposed that a curtain be arranged at one end of the hall, with a hole through it, and some of the "young ladies" stand hidden behind it; then "the young gentlemen" were to be allowed to guess whose hand was thrust through the hole, as said young ladies in turn did this; each young "gentle-

man" was to pay a dime for guessing, and if correct in his guess, was to kiss the owner of the hand.

It was simple enough, as Mr. Blaney explained it, and gross and vulgar enough, as Mr. Freeman listened to the explanation; and the minister was glad, from the bottom of his heart, when two or three mothers, whose daughters were likely to be involved in this indiscriminate orgy, rather summarily objected. So the promising plan was given up, and Mr. Blaney turned his inventive mind to other ends.

Mr. Freeman wandered about from table to table, and among the seats and the booths, buying some trinket in one place and chatting with a friend in another place. His soul was much disturbed; he was glad that his wife had been detained at home, even though by a bad attack of influenza. He felt more or less ashamed of certain of his parishioners, as he encountered the members of other churches, and was regretful of the emptiness of the Emmanuel Church treasury, which was used as an excuse for such barbarous methods of raising money. Occasionally, however, it occurred to him that most of these visiting folk would be engaged in similar enterprises in their own churches before the year was out, and even now were probably observant of any "novelties" which might be turned to good account when their time came.

Mr. Marshall, between whom and his minister there existed a peculiar yet very real sympathy, joined Mr. Freeman, after the evening's round of excitement was over, and together they walked home. With a feeling of great relief the harassed clergyman came out into the open air; and he quickly noted in himself — for he was very self-analytical — an added sense of relief, in the companionship of the great-hearted though meagrely educated man who walked beside him. There

was something large and warm about Mr. Marshall's nature, which rested and comforted so sensitive and intense a person as the minister. There were not a half dozen points of intellectual sympathy between them. The sturdy mill-owner had read little or nothing about Roman or Greek history, and knew nothing about Adam Smith or Karl Marx, and had never heard of Venetian and Florentine schools of painting; but he read his daily newspaper regularly, and had his own views on most of the practical questions of the day. Then, underneath all this, there was that indefinable quality or substratum which we call "largeness of nature." There was nothing petty about him; he was incapable of a mean act. Even in his mill management, where minute attention to details counted for so much, he disregarded these details more than did most managers, and made up for this disregard by his ceaseless energy and his sympathy for his workpeople, who worked under him with such genuine loyalty and love that his mill turned out more rolls of cloth per day than any mill in all that region.

This kind of elemental, objective nature was temperamentally suited to the minister and his almost morbidly sensitive nerves; and he felt the comfort of the man's presence, even though no word passed between them. Mr. Marshall, with a natural tact which many a society belle might have justly envied, said nothing for several moments, then casually remarked, in his deep, rich voice: "Do you think the President will veto that appropriation bill for rivers and harbors? I see that the Western papers are after him with a sharp stick."

Mr. Freeman instantly recognized the other's kind wish to divert him from his depressing line of thought, and his heart gave a quick leap of gratitude. Neither of them cared, at that moment, for appropriation bills

or Western newspapers; but Mr. Marshall knew where the minister's thought centred, and he tried to distract him. He knew how this cultivated, earnest-souled preacher loathed the antics of the festival from which they had just emerged. He did not, himself, loathe them — he rather enjoyed them; but, together with this untrained quality of his own nature, he had a delicate understanding of natures quite unlike his own, and could give his minister more real sympathy and solace than could any other member of the parish.

"It is kind of you to speak of such matters," said Mr. Freeman, gently laying his hand, for a moment, on the other's arm, "but I was thinking of something else."

Mr. Marshall knew well what he was thinking about, but did not say so; he merely emitted a subdued "Yes," and waited for the minister to continue.

"I was reflecting," said the minister, "on the unhappy necessity which so many churches seem to be under, of resorting to all kinds of devices in order to pay their bills. Very many churches have greatly shifted from the old-time Puritan standards of administration, as well as from the ancient standards of doctrine. It seems to me, sometimes, as if it were better that a religious society should sink out of existence than preserve its financial position by an undue emphasis of the lighter and more meretricious phases of social life. It ought to be more than a club; it ought to develop moral and spiritual force, within itself, and give of this force to the world; but, instead, by far the largest part of its strength is used in acquiring the money to pay its own bills. It is like a machine, which is so crudely constructed that it uses all the power transmitted to it from the engine, or the workman's foot or hand, in overcoming its own friction, and barely succeeds in keeping in motion, without turning out any work."

Mr. Marshall saw the force of the illustration, and saw, too, the truthfulness of his minister's application of it. He saw it, but did not feel it as keenly, as personally; and perhaps the greatest defect which he had, in his honest, generous nature, was that excessive love of peace and good will which sometimes leads a man to put off a duty, or makes him refuse to face an unpleasant fact. He meant to do the right thing always, himself, and he tried to think that other people had the same good intention; but, alas, they did not; and in any joint action, like raising money or serving on a committee, he was always allowed to do much more than his part; yet, at the same time, his frank, kind, sympathetic way, expectant as it was of other people's best thoughts and deeds, did actually call out from them much more generous conduct than they gave to anybody else.

"People are queer about church matters," remarked Mr. Marshall, presently, pulling away at his thick black beard and chuckling as he spoke. "They act sorter different about paying their dues for religion, from what they do in paying for clubs and concerts and clothes."

He paused, never being given to much continuous speech, but, as his hearer said nothing, he went on: "I've been on the Financial Committee some three years now, and I've seen some funny things; — beats the circus."

Again he paused. He was evidently amused at his own recollections, but was shy, as always, of forcing himself on an unwilling listener. Still, as Mr. Freeman evidently did not wish to speak, he slowly continued: "There was that man Purnell; gone to live in Boston now. He was a case. When we decided, — the committee, — a year ago, to bring up all the pew-rentals to their proper level, we had fun. You see, years ago every pew was appraised by a committee, and a proper

rental set on it; but of late years the treasurer got into the way of letting people have a few pews at a somewhat lower price, if they said they couldn't pay the appraised value. Well, we rearranged the matter, and sent circulars to all the families in the parish, explaining about it; and such a row as some of 'em raised!"

Mr. Marshall seemed to really enjoy the memory of it; never a word did he say about the vast quantity of oil he had poured on the troubled waters, not a word as to the seven destitute families whose pews he was even now retaining for them by quietly paying the difference between the old lapsed price and the new price. He simply chuckled, and stuffed his black beard into his mouth as if bent on self-strangulation. And his hearty good nature was so infectious that the troubled clergyman felt his tense nerves relax a little, and a sigh escaped his lips.

"What happened?" he inquired, thus breaking through his usual adverse attitude toward parish gossip, in view of his impending resignation.

"Well, the worst case was that Purnell. He sent a letter to our Chairman, and threatened to give up his seat; said it was outrageous to change the prices of pews — a breach of faith, and all that; and he let into Dr. Mixer one day in the store, so I'm told, in good style. I'd like to have seen it." And again he broke into a subdued laugh.

"Did he give it up?" inquired Mr. Freeman, only mildly interested in the financial phase of the matter.

"Well, in one way he did; and in another way he didn't," responded Mr. Marshall. "You see, when the letter was read at our committee meeting, and Dr. Mixer gave us a hint or two about Purnell's interview with him at the store, there was some uneasiness for a few moments; of course the committee didn't

want to lose a rental, but they thought they ought to stand by their previous decision; when, just as we waited, the treasurer, Pidge, after glancing over his books, gave a sort of snicker and squeaked out: 'You won't lose much, gentlemen, if he does give up his pew. He hasn't paid a cent's rental on it since he come into the society, and I have mailed him due-bills every quarter.'"

"I am surprised," exclaimed Mr. Freeman, his surprise lifting him for the moment quite out of his depression of spirits. "I supposed that Mr. Purnell was more of a man than that. I have often noticed him and his wife and three children, seating themselves in that pew with what seemed to me a justifiable sense of ownership. It really was a pleasant sight to see an entire family so regularly at church. And now you spoil it all" — he smiled as he spoke — "by telling me this unpleasant fact about them. I don't see how a man can do such a thing as that."

"I know you don't see how," assented his companion, cheerfully but firmly; "yet the world is full of that kind. I see more of that side of life than you do. Our treasurer has come up against some hard facts in his life, too, and he wasn't much surprised. Mixer was, though. Mixer was totally taken in by the man's high air. And we had a good laugh at him when the treasurer finished."

The sturdy mill-owner laughed again, as he recalled the scene; Mr. Freeman, despite his depression, joined in the laugh. He knew, in general, the type of person depicted: the person who does the least for a church, yet demands the most of its minister, and is loudest in his criticism and condemnation. Moreover, the incident narrated gave him a grain of comfort in another way; he felt a certain relief from the grinding anxiety about

financial shortages, as he saw Mr. Marshall — on whom the burden rested more than on anybody else — saw him treat the matter so casually and carelessly. This was really the clever kindly purpose which Mr. Marshall had in mind in telling his story; but the minister did not know it, and knew only that the big, strong-nerved man beside him gave him great comfort. After a short pause Mr. Freeman decided to speak plainly to his companion, about his proposed resignation; and in a few quiet words he did so.

It was with real regret that Mr. Marshall now heard, from his pastor's lips, a confirmation of the rumor which had been circulating of late through the parish. He knew that any attempt to change Mr. Freeman's purpose would be vain. He had measured and tested the minister's character, on several occasions, and he knew what unyielding fibre there was within. As to his peculiar ways about church customs and proprieties, the bluff mill-owner could not quite understand him; yet, even though he could not, there was a delicate sense hidden under his own offhand manners, which made him vaguely respect and even admire the repression and sensitiveness of the more finely trained minister.

"Sorry to hear you say that," he replied, when Freeman had finished. "You have done me a monstrous sight of good, sometimes, when you might not have thought it." Then, after a pause, "And my son Ned jest swears by you, he does; that is to say, he don't swear, you know, at least I hope he don't, but he takes what you say, as law and gospel."

This was an utter surprise to Freeman, and was as grateful to his soul as cool water to thirsty lips. Ned was a young fellow of seventeen, whom Mr. Freeman had not specially noticed, but had talked with him on

several occasions, and evidently he had met some real need in the young nature.

"I had no idea of such feeling on his part," said Mr. Freeman, simply and unaffectedly. "I had even thought, at times, that he held himself aloof from me."

"Far from it!" returned Mr. Marshall. "And my daughter, Olive, feels just the same as Ned. They often discuss your sermons, after we go home from church; and Olive is a pretty sharp hand at an argument, too. I wish you could — I wish — well, I —" The speaker stumbled and ahemmed, and plainly had meant to say something more, but checked himself, and began some talk about a railroad accident which had recently occurred. The slight curiosity which Mr. Freeman felt as to the other's sudden change of topic was not gratified. The truth was that the kind-hearted mill-owner had seen that it involved an unpleasant side, and had steered away. What he intended to say was something like this: "I wish you could have seen her silence Mr. Blaney, a week or two ago, when that person was finding fault with the sermons. She told him that they were too refined, in their simplicity of expression, for many persons in the congregation, and that they dealt with a kind of life and conduct which was too high and too spiritual for the perceptions of many who criticised them."

Mr. Marshall saw, at the moment when he started on this bit of amusing reminiscence, that it implied a certain amount of parish fault-finding; and he knew that Mr. Freeman would be more disturbed by that element in the episode than by its amusing features; so he had turned away from it, impulsively and not very skilfully.

However, that was precisely what the spirited and somewhat headstrong young girl had told the voluble gentleman, and her father was not wholly displeased

with her action. So far as he, her father, could trust his own judgment, Mr. Blaney possessed a marvellous "gift of language." That his daughter did not share even this admiration was no anxiety to him; he allowed her to form her own opinions.

The walk and conversation of the two friends terminated naturally, when Mr. Freeman's house was reached. Mr. Marshall had insisted on walking with him to this point. At parting Mr. Marshall said, in the halting way which always fettered him when he felt most deeply: "I shall be, myself, very sorry indeed to have you leave us. You have been doing a grand work among our young people; and as for the older ones — well, nobody can teach old dogs new tricks. However, I'm sorry you feel about going as you do."

He spoke truly, and would have gone very deeply into his pocket to make up deficits, if the man whom his two children so respected would have remained; but Mr. Freeman took his big, rough hand in both his own, as they stood at the gate, and said: "I thank you, my dear friend; you are a true friend. A minister often knows but little who his friends really are; but I know and respect you, and you have helped me greatly in my work, and have often kept me from losing faith in human nature. Good night, good night, Mr. Marshall! God bless you!" And he hurried away into the house, leaving the mill-owner honestly confused as to how he could possibly have helped his minister, except — well except, perhaps, in the slight matter of handing over a few needed dollars into the church treasury.

CHAPTER V

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

"And though I've learned some souls are base,
I would not therefore hate the race,
I still would bless my fellow-men
And trust them, though deceived again."

A WEEK or two afterward, Mr. Freeman sat, one forenoon, in his study. He had not yet sent in his resignation, but he had written it; he had prepared one copy, in some warmth of feeling, and then, on re-reading it, had frankly recognized the bitterness which lay beneath its formal phrases, and had torn it up. The second draft, made more calmly, now lay open on his desk before him. His troubled gaze wandered caressingly about the walls of his study. The room was spacious and well lighted, and had a large fireplace, where burned, in the winter months, a companionable and hospitable log fire. Bookshelves, well filled, extended across three sides of the room. A stuffed hawk-owl sat solemnly perched on a stand, high over the door; it reminded its owner of the old care-free college days. Over the fireplace was a large copy of Albert Dürer's "Praying Hands." The minister looked long and earnestly at them. Thin, worn, beseeching hands — reaching upward like a Gothic arch, — they had many a time voiced the unspoken prayers of his heart, in moods of soul-searching meditation; now he looked at them, fixed and steadfast in their petitioning, but they seemed to be wrapt in their own devotions, and to be unable or unwilling to bear his wishes and pledges heavenward.

Near the hands was a photograph of Fra Bartolomeo's painting of Savonarola. Freeman had bought it in Florence. Savonarola had been a fascinating personality to him, as a student, and he had dreamed — oh how idly, as now was proved — of emulating the pulpit power of the famous Prior of San Marco. That was a selfish, ambitious purpose, now justly crushed out. Preaching was the very element in his ministry in which he had found himself most lacking. He knew now that hard work, resolute and persistent as it might be, would not make a man into a preacher; hard work could make him a scholar, but not an impassioned, eloquent speaker. He saw it all clearly. Temperament was lacking to him. His wife, first, had discovered his deficiency, and she had waited patiently until he should see it, himself, after many failures, after fierce struggles; and she had boldly declared that he was too sincere a nature to be eloquent. "The eloquent speaker," she had affirmed, "whether preacher or lecturer or campaign orator — unless he sprang into being in a great crisis, and was upborne on the wave of a great reform, — the eloquent speaker must be essentially dramatic in temperament; and to be that, a man must be lightly grounded in his own personal purposes and principles, and be easily transferable to any mood or position which occasion might suggest."

Mrs. Freeman was a tall woman, of rather stately mien; she walked with dignity, and her thin face, with its delicately chiselled features, was of a patrician type, and commanded the distant respect and even the fear of most strangers, until they had learned to honor the sweetness and sincerity that mingled with the dignity, and made her the truest of friends.

Lawrence greatly valued her judgment on most matters, and consulted her in all his affairs. She seemed

a little rigid, sometimes, in her uncompromising judgments, but her husband knew where the relaxing muscles of her face would betray themselves, under playful attack, quite as a boy knows where the ice on the lake in the springtime will earliest thaw, and will hint at summer's warmth and jollity.

There she sat, his ever dear and sympathetic wife, over by the window, enthroned in her big chair — *her* big chair, always reserved for her in the study — now preparing a paper for the College Club. She knew a great deal about many things, — did this woman of firm, delicate face and fearless brown eyes, — which most women care little to investigate, or else touch lightly, as they quote wise phrases dropped from masculine lips. So Rebecca Freeman had been a strong support to her husband intellectually, as well as a loving and loyal guardian of the Lares and Penates. He valued her opinion of his sermons, beyond the judgment of any or all his congregation. Some preachers court comment and criticism from certain members of their parish — usually women-folk; that is, they say that they desire enlightenment on this or that discourse or address, when their real wish is for praise; and the average woman is quick to detect the masculine appeal for approving words, and responds, more or less tactfully, to the demand. But Lawrence Freeman was too candidly self-analytical to be betrayed into this suppliant attitude, and was too sensitive to expose himself to unnecessary disapproval. His wife knew well his high ideals, and knew how to encourage him when he fell below them. She was not only his wife, legally related to him, but she was his counsellor and confidant, — she was his friend, his "chum"; and they shared everything equally, from dollars to ideas, and, hand in hand, met the joys and sorrows of life. With all the apparently close relation-

ships into which an earnest, sympathetic pastor comes, there is, nevertheless, in his experience, much isolation. Beneath the layer of official ministration, which is outside, which is a part of every clergyman's life, however vigorously he may disclaim it, there is the man's own personal temperament, where his fancies and foibles find expression; and into this inner circle it is not permitted many to penetrate. Many of the greatest preachers in history have lived in entire isolation, and their innermost defects and weaknesses have been known only to God, — sometimes not known to the man himself; but that preacher is most fortunate, who has one human friend whom he can invite into the inner circle of his doubts and despondencies, and vanities and vagaries, and yet can retain that friend's respect and love.

Thus with Lawrence Freeman; the tall, straight, self-reliant woman in the big chair knew him thoroughly, and was patient with his failures and proud of his successes. Often, of late, she had silently reflected that a clear, strong mind like his, and such rare tenacity of will and purpose as his, would surely have carried him to the front rank of leadership in most professions or vocations. In the law, or in mercantile life, he would have fought his way irresistibly to assured success; Lawrence, for his part, knew that no failure could weaken her affection for him, but he longed to deserve her admiration; and this pastorate over Emmanuel Church was certainly not resulting successfully — that is, when judged by that commercial standard of money, assets, and full pews, which had come more and more to the front in that religious society.

"Rebecca," said the discouraged man, presently, "I have written out my letter of resignation." And he read it aloud, calmly, listlessly; and she paused and listened. Eager as she was in many of her own pur-

suits, none of these could ever restrain her from giving to her husband, on the instant, the sympathy, intellective or emotional, which he so often craved.

He waited for her comments. He knew that she would say exactly what she thought; and often her speech, in his presence alone, was far more vigorous and even caustic than the outside world heard from her lips. "That is all right," she said. "A little too mild, my dear, perhaps; but, on the whole, it is wiser to lean that way. When will you send it? Better send it at once, I think. We have talked and talked the matter over, and your mind will be easier when the step is once taken. It isn't such a bad step, either. For my part, I almost wish you were taking leave of the profession itself, instead of resigning simply from Emmanuel Church."

This was a point which they had frequently discussed. Mr. Freeman, however, shook his head, now as always, when such suggestions were made by his wife. They both knew that he could easily and comfortably maintain his family in other occupations. His work and writings in sociology and political economy had brought him some reputation, and a college professorship could have been easily his if he had desired it; moreover, his wife had a snug little income of her own, which precluded, for them both, any danger of destitution. But he felt an abounding interest in his profession, and knew that in most ways he was fitted for it. The higher part of it — its idealism, its tender ministry, he loved as strongly as ever; the lower parts, where, in so many churches, the qualities of a commercial traveller and a public entertainer are in demand — these things he loathed and hated.

After a short pause Mrs. Freeman said: "Of course I appreciate your high feeling about your profession,

Lawrence. At the same time you must remember —" here her rather sincere countenance took on a mischievous expression, — "that I did not marry the Reverend Lawrence Freeman — I simply married *you;* you know I never heard you preach until after we were married."

"No, you did not," assented her husband; and he added, grimly, "if you had, you wouldn't have married me."

"Perhaps not," assented his wife, smiling enigmatically. Then she came over toward him, fun giving place to tenderness, in her face and voice.

"You are unreasonably depressed on that score, my dear. You are not a Bossuet — thank goodness you are not — but you are a thoughtful and earnest speaker. I rarely hear you preach a sermon that I am ashamed of; you give the people sound counsel and instruction. Indeed, the weak spot is, Lawrence, that you are more a teacher than a preacher; but then, dear, how about the Great Teacher in Galilee? I suspect that he never pronounced such orations as did the Bishop of Meaux, or uttered such long, impassioned appeals as did the Prior of San Marco; but he simply taught, and so do you. The disciple must not be above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. There, now, is some of his teaching for you!" And she caressed him as she spoke.

"True, the Master said that," admitted Lawrence, with a twinkle in his eye, despite himself. "But the 'multitude heard him gladly,' we are told; and that is more than they do me." And he took his wife's hand gently and fondly in his own, and smiled up at her, as she stood beside him.

"To be sure," assented she, quickly catching and encouraging his vein of fun. "Yet we are not told how

large the multitude was; besides, people had less to occupy them in those days than now, and were readier for diversion by any new spectacle; there wasn't so much competition, I fancy. Then, too the Great Teacher stayed only a brief time in any one place; he was continuously moving about from village to village."

"You mean that his pastorates were short ones?" queried Freeman, with grim humor. And then continued, following out the conceit. "Short pastorates seem to be the best, now, as then. It is easy, in these days, to preach interestingly to a congregation, for a few weeks or months; the novelty of voice and manner holds through that length of time. But longer than that — well, that is another problem. Moreover, I have sometimes wondered whether a responsibility for pew-rentals would not have seriously complicated the Master's work."

Already the two were getting the better of the minister's despondency, and their love, so deep and satisfying, was driving away the gloom. And presently, after a few moments of that silent, deep content of companionship, which comes in all true marriages, Lawrence said, quite casually, "I shall go out and mail my letter to the committee, and have that much done."

As he put on his hat and started toward the door, the bell rang. Opening it, he met Mrs. Fifield, one of his parishioners, and invited her to enter.

Mrs. Matilda Fifield — or, as everybody called her, familiarly, "Matilda" — was a stout, red-faced woman, with large, lustreless eyes and a very voluble tongue. She had been deserted, suddenly and silently, by her husband, years before, after a married life of one year. People said that the poor little man had a narrow escape; that he did wisely to go as he did; that Matilda would have talked him to death, with her amiable and

aimless chatter, if he had not thus taken his departure. Her tongue moved much more rapidly than did her brain; often the tongue went on and on, after she had finished one idea and while she was clumsily casting about for another. "I am so glad to see you," she began, giving one hand to Mr. Freeman, the other to his wife. "I am afraid you were going out."

"Yes, I — was," answered the minister, frankly; and he wished that he had started five minutes earlier. He did not welcome her very cordially, but there was never any need of very great delicacy, in dealing with Matilda; she always blundered straight on, good-naturedly, without seeming to need much sympathetic attention.

"Yes, I am glad I found you in," she repeated, and moved over to a chair and sat down. Of course there was no other thing to do, so the minister also sat down, but persistently kept his hat in his hand. Mrs. Freeman abruptly broke away, saying (though Matilda, smiling and talking, hardly heard her) that she must go upstairs to attend to some duties.

"I'm sure I shan't keep you more than a minute," said Matilda, loosening her jacket, and preparing for a long interview. "I just came, you know, to tell you that I've moved. That house on North Street wasn't at all convenient; and I like this one much better where I am now."

With a vain hope of cutting the interview short, Mr. Freeman took out his note-book and said, "I will make a memorandum of your number; you — "

"Yes, that is what I wanted," said Matilda, volubly, and smiling in her thick, bovine way. "I thought that it would be so bad if you went away up there to call, and I was out."

"Worse things might happen," reflected the minister, in a sadly unpastoral way. Then he held up the

note-book conspicuously, and intimated, pencil in hand, that he was ready to record the street and number.

But no such luck; away cantered Matilda. "I know I shall like the neighborhood better, too. In that other place the neighbors were all so cold and unsocial. They didn't call on me more than once — any of them; and I did my best to be social."

The minister lowered his note-book and nodded mechanically. His thoughts began to wander. At times like these he often outlined a sermon to himself; but to-day he had not started on any subject; — evidently the time was to be a dead loss. He roused himself, when there was a slight lull in the stream of talk, and faintly hoped for the end. He caught her closing words: "And I told them I couldn't; now could I, Mr. Freeman? Could I, possibly?"

He had not the slightest idea about the "could" or the "couldn't" of it; but he thought he was safe in nodding his head slowly in agreement with this unheard decision of hers, and then attempted to get her back to the subject in hand. He murmured, gently "Very true, very true, very true." And having thus, as he hoped, got his innings, he raised his voice, and in a cheerful tone, asked, "Now as to your change of —"

"Yes! Exactly!" interrupted Matilda, who really had forgotten what she came for, and was somewhat at a loss for talking material. "I felt that you ought to be informed at once; because, you know, I might be suddenly ill, and then I would want to see you." This mention of illness threw her off on a new tack, and she started: "There is a great deal of illness about, you know; I've heard of ever so many cases during the past week, and I took a little bit of a cold last Tuesday, and I hope it will not result in anything serious. My tendency is toward rheumatic affections, you know; and

that medicine of Dr. Mixer's costs a great deal, but I had to buy eleven bottles of it last year. Although we can't be sure, can we, when we buy such remedies, that we are getting our money's worth? And besides that — "

There she was, off on the fruitful theme of her ill health and "bad feelings"; the minister knew well what endless variations there were in that theme, and he grew desperate. He arose and asserted himself. "Certainly! Yes! Of course! Yes! But now — you were just about to tell me your new street and number — "

Matilda's voice was not strong, and she was silenced — that is, acoustically speaking; but she, too, arose slowly, and she looked at him in a most aggrieved way. She could not have shown more sense of personal injury if he had ordered her to stop talking, or told her she was an idle gossip. With this change in her facial expression, Mr. Freeman felt himself forced into the rôle of "tyrannical brute"; and, somewhat abashed, he mildly repeated his question, and raised note-book and pencil.

There was a pause; then Matilda, as if on the point of breaking into tears, murmured: "I was just going to tell you, Mr. Freeman. I know — I know you did not mean to be unsympathetic, but your voice fairly frightened me; and — " Here her own voice grew broken, though only for a moment, and her face quickly took on its usual ruddy, self-absorbed, good-natured content, and Mr. Freeman sighed; away she went, on another long canter, turning into every lane and by-path that opened along the road. Those incessant "ands" of hers nearly drove the minister frantic. They were, grammatically considered, connectives; but, in Matilda's mouth, they connected nothing — they were like marks for breathing, which a vocalist writes into a song — they gave her new force, for whatever might follow.

Matters looked rather depressing for the minister;

but at this point Mrs. Freeman appeared. There was a tension about her firm mouth which indicated decision and action. Directly that she entered, although her visitor was in full flight of reminiscence about modern household heating and lighting and cooking, she said, in a high, hard tone, which cut straight through Matilda's rather mushy tones like a knife through cheese: "I am very sorry, Mrs. Fifield, but Mr. Freeman was just on the point of going out. Lawrence, will you kindly call at the grocer's, on the way, and pay this bill?" (handing him a bill — resourceful woman! — which she had brought down). "The vegetables which were ordered yesterday have not come; you might also remind him of that fact."

All this was delivered with head high in air, the language being of a very precise and elevated character, and quite intelligible to her husband. He, on his part, played up to her with alacrity; and, with a hasty bow and a word to the somewhat abashed Matilda, went quickly toward the door. As he went out, he saw his wife's manner soften and her tones become more natural, as she motioned the visitor to her seat. She was bent on doing two things, and she did them: first she had rescued her bored husband; and second, she meant to placate any resentment which might have been aroused in Mrs. Fifield's breast, before she let her go; or, rather, before she made her go. She intended, now, to draw down on herself and endure a certain amount of the loquacious creature's talk, and when she saw a fit time, she would end it. Moreover, there was a half-conscious purpose in her heart, which now dictated her opening pacificatory remarks. "One of Mr. Freeman's errands, this morning, you will doubtless be interested in. He is posting a letter to the parish committee, — his letter of resignation."

Now Matilda was easy game. No key to cipher-writing was needed for an interpretation of her words and inflections. She was a simple, frank, kind-hearted, rather dull creature, active in a plodding way, was much laughed at behind her back, and would have been also laughed at to her face had she not, — happily for her, — married into one of the leading families of the town. That saved her some personal confusion and shame, at times, and warded off many rebuffs. As soon as Mrs. Freeman had thrown out her information, she watched her visitor; and she immediately knew, by the calm way in which the excitable woman took it, that it was not unexpected — evidently the subject had been generally discussed through the parish.

"Well, now, I'm sorry to hear that," said Matilda, settling back comfortably in her chair; and the honest soul really was sorry.

But Mrs. Freeman was bent on certain investigations. So she threw out another sentence. The first one had not ignited the train of her visitor's combustibles; she hoped this one would. "Yes, it seems best. He will preach his last sermon on the last Sunday of the month, and then Emmanuel Church will be able to look for some better incumbent."

This was efficacious in producing the desired result. Matilda burst out: "Oh, how can you say so! You know we shall never find such another minister as dear Mr. Freeman. That is to say — you know — I mean — that we may possibly get a better — no, I don't mean exactly that; I always tell folks that preaching isn't anything in a minister — I always tell 'em that, when I hear anybody — anybody — talking, you know. Oh, how many times I have stood up for your husband, Mrs. Freeman! I always do."

Mrs. Freeman's countenance wore an expression of

mingled annoyance and amusement. She was getting precisely what she had tried for; through Matilda's clumsy hodge-podge of sympathy and self-justification, the minister's wife was obtaining a fairly good statement of the real attitude of the parish toward her husband. She had known it all, in a general way, before; but it amused her to play Matilda, like a great gaping codfish on a strong line, and she would take her off the hook when the fun of it all had ceased. "You have a kind heart, Mrs. Fifield," she said, pouring on a drop of lubricant, to start the wheels again.

"So good of you to say that!" cried Matilda, who had not received any sort of compliment for many years. Her gratitude for the easily spoken though honestly spoken words quite touched Mrs. Freeman's own heart. "I have liked Mr. Freeman better than any minister since Dr. Larkin," continued the visitor, feeling that in saying this she was conveying the very highest praise possible.

Now Dr. Larkin, — peace to his ashes! — was a minister who had dwelt in the town when Matilda was about twelve years old. He was no better and no worse than many of his predecessors and successors; but a little study of parochial history and biography will show any curious observer that, of all the clergymen with whom any given person has ever been brought into contact, that clergyman will be most idealized and even idolized who happened to come into relations with said person at the impressible period between ten and fifteen years of age. That particular pastor will be found to have made a deeper impression — as a devout and eloquent man — than any who came before or after him; and will be used, throughout said person's life, as the standard of perfection for all pastors and ministers.

Thus it was with Matilda. Dr. Larkin had really

been a pompous and somewhat indolent gentleman, of sonorous speech and benign manner, who had a good stock of sermons, and could read them with considerable effect. Of original ideas he had never one, and as to self-sacrifice, he carefully avoided it. So the older generation had said; but to Matilda, and all her youthful generation, the white-haired patriarchal pastor had embodied all the wisdom of the ages and most of the virtues of the saints. So Matilda was really striking her highest and loudest note of praise of Mr. Freeman, in speaking as she did.

"Yes," she bubbled on, like a fountain of mingled sweet and bitter, "and I was so mad with Miss — well, perhaps I'd better not call any names," she interjected, blushing proudly with a sense of her discretion. "But enough to say that when that woman got off something about Mr. Freeman's always making such solemn calls, I just told her it was no such thing; and that other people didn't think so; and I had the proof right at my tongue's end. I recollected what Miss Henley — there! I didn't mean to let that out but — now that 'tis out, why 'tis. Well, I told her that Miss Henley complained of just the opposite thing; Miss Henley told — there! I almost said that right out — but she told somebody, who told me, that she thought the minister talked too much nonsense; at least he did when he came to her house. So you see, I had Miss — Miss — well, I had her, right there." And triumph, turgid triumph, bespread her great round red face, and she beamed on her hostess, and waited for another word of commendation.

Mrs. Freeman murmured a word or two, presumably of approval and thanks, but took care not to divert Matilda from the line of her thought. She looked upon her visitor as an experimenter might look upon a mes-

meric subject, being careful to soothe and encourage her in her present confidential reminiscences. Matilda was assured of sympathy in her efforts to defend her minister's fair fame, and brought forth sundry other pleasing and enlightening recollections. "Yes, I always have stood up for Mr. Freeman." And she narrated several other aspersions and attacks, which she evidently felt that she had repelled by the vigor of her tongue and her skill in dialectic. The narration of them made Mrs. Freeman almost writhe with anger, they revealed such ingratitude and such wilful misunderstanding of a clergyman's highest efforts; but her curiosity and sense of humor sustained her, and kept her countenance reasonably responsive. Finally, when she could bear no more, she arose and broke in upon a choice piece of gossip, which had evidently been bandied freely about the parish about six months before; and, putting out her hand, thanked her visitor for the pleasure of her call, and actually led her, persistently, toward the hall and front door. This point reached, she opened the door, meantime bowing and talking, and, despite Matilda's surprise and clumsy manœuvring, had her speedily outside, and, in another moment, had the door shut. This done, she gave vent to a hysterical little cry, and wandered mechanically into the parlor, with tears in her eyes and a chill of rage as much as of pain at her heart.

"Rebecca," spoke a familiar voice. She looked up, in surprise, and her husband stood before her.

"Why! how are you here?" she broke out.

"I crept in through the back door," he replied, with an attempt at a laugh. "I suspected what you were planning to do with that poor, dear, dull creature, and I hurried back."

"Did you hear what she was saying about the comments on your sermon of two weeks ago?"

"I did," he said gravely. "And perhaps they were points soundly made. McLean, with whom I exchanged pulpits a month ago, is the preacher they evidently liked. What was his subject or text? Do you happen to recall either of them?"

"Yes, he preached an excellent sermon, I must admit, on —"

"The Parable of the Sower?" suggested her husband, somewhat eagerly.

"Yes, that was it. How did you know? I purposely said nothing about it to you."

A sad smile stole over Mr. Freeman's face, as he turned away and sat down. "I guessed correctly, didn't I, dear?" he remarked; "yet not by any preternatural power. The simple fact is that McLean has that one sermon, which he wrote, years ago, in the Theological Seminary; and he has doctored it up, repeatedly, since, until it abounds in sparkling gems of thought and feeling. It is the only respectable discourse the man has, and he invariably preaches that sermon, at a first hearing in any church. He was in the school when I was there. All the men of that year knew about the sermon; and I have heard that two or three of them have taken a wicked delight in exchanging with him a second time, speedily after the first, and have had a quiet laugh over the sudden fall in the thermometer of opinion, in their congregations. However, my dear, I must not become narrowed and imbittered. And I will not. It is hard, though, to face such dismal, discouraging phases of human nature, as were brought out by your clever baiting of that clumsy-witted creature."

"To think of that odious, unctuous man Mixer demanding more 'spiritual' sermons!" moaned Mrs. Freeman, laughing, yet with wet eyes. "Could anything possibly be more absurd? You heard Ma-

tilda let that pleasing bit of information out, didn't you?"

"I heard it," said her husband, speaking somewhat absently, as if his thoughts were elsewhere. Then, after a moment of silence in the room, he spoke again, and earnestly and sadly. "The hardest thing the woman said was that about the Claverlys; you noticed it?"

"Yes; you mean that — that — well, that sneer at your having mistaken your vocation; no real call, etc."

She could hardly bear to repeat the cruel words; but he and she both had heard them, and Mr. Freeman resumed, in a low and repressed voice: "To think of their saying such things, or thinking such things! when only a year ago I was repeatedly in their family, giving my counsel and my sympathy so freely. You remember Mrs. Claverly was very ill; and they clung to me, and entreated me to come every day; and I gave them, in their great need, my heart's best, Rebecca. I cannot forget certain scenes beneath that roof, when the physicians had given the sick woman up, and those anxious, despairing people, husband and daughters, stood with tears in their eyes, and faces convulsed with anguish, and begged and almost demanded that I call back their loved one from the shadows even then closing about her. And we knelt, all of us; and I prayed to God, feeling on my heart the full weight of agony which burdened them. I hardly know how that scene ended. They wept on my shoulders, wrung my hands, and thanked me with sobs and moans."

Mr. Freeman's voice was almost inaudible, as he finished. He rarely spoke so freely, even to his wife, of such experiences; but she knew that he had a delicate and profound sympathy, at such times, and often had she received him, coming home from such experiences, utterly exhausted. "Oh, the fickleness of weak

human nature!" she murmured. For she recollected that the sick woman, Mrs. Claverly, had suddenly begun to recover, was now a well woman, and evidently was capable, in the brief space of one year, of forgetting all that devotion and sympathy, and of saying such mischievous and cruel words. Moreover, Mrs. Freeman recollected, in addition, that one of the daughters, Bertha, had applied to her minister, about six months before, for his influence and intercession with the school committee, in securing a position as teacher in the public schools.

"Did Bertha Claverly get that appointment to the grammar grade?" she inquired; "you talked with one or two of the committee, I believe."

"Yes, oh, yes!" responded her husband. "I had quite forgotten that. She is teaching regularly now."

Neither said more. The same sad reflections were in both their minds; but both knew that no good was to be gained by dwelling upon such discouraging sides of human nature. Mrs. Freeman was the first to rouse herself, and she exclaimed cheerily, "Well, my dear, did you mail the letter?"

"Yes, yes, it's done. The die is cast. We leave it all, in a month."

"Good, good! I am much relieved; and I know that you will be, also. I wish you would take my advice about giving up the profession, entirely; but there, I know you won't."

The minister smiled tenderly upon her, but shook his head with determination; and although she was urging him to take this step, she loved him the more, and the more admired him, because of the high quality in him which made him refuse to heed her advice. "I shall not repudiate my ordination vows," he said solemnly, "so long as I feel that there is any possibility of my

doing good work, even in some obscure corner of the vineyard."

"One of your most serious defects, my dear," said the wife, putting her arm lovingly about his neck, "is your sensitiveness. It seems a strange kind of defect in a clergyman, I admit; but it really is a defect, in these days, under present conditions. I have noticed that many of the successful ministers — if I may be allowed, my dear sir, for the moment" (with a kiss on his hand, which she was holding), "to use the word 'success' in its worldly sense — very many of them are men of great physical vigor, rather than spiritual vitality; they are men of kindliness of manner, and of little or no great delicacy. A shy minister is foreordained to be a failure. He must not be in the least encumbered, socially or in the pulpit, by any overdrawn feelings of delicacy. He must put out his hand to men with boldness, and put up his voice to his Maker, loudly and even familiarly. Anything less than the most outspoken, unreserved boldness and self-confidence, toward both man and God, is quickly mistaken for timidity or weakness. I have never — "

"There, there! Rebecca," interposed her husband, with a gentle but amused show of authority, "you are getting too firmly seated on the tripod, as Pythian priestess, and are bent on delivering your oracle; but I will not countenance it. You are partly right, but only partly so. Let me tell you about the plan I have for our future. I am much interested in it, and I think we will be very happy yet, and still be true to the best there is in us."

CHAPTER VI

FROM HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES

"The blessed work of helping the world forward happily does not wait to be done by perfect men; and I should imagine that neither Luther nor John Bunyan, for example, would have satisfied the modern demand for an ideal hero." — GEORGE ELIOT.

Two months passed, and important changes had been made. Mr. Freeman had closed his ministry over Emmanuel Church, and had entered upon a field of work which he had been contemplating for a considerable time. On the north side of the town there was a dense population of rather rough, ignorant people, where the police force was doubled at night, and persons who were affluent enough to carry watches did not much care to display them. Scattered among these disorderly classes were many individuals and families, of higher intellectual and moral attainments. Some of these families were descendants of well-to-do original settlers; for this north side was the part of the city first built, and was now fallen into decay, as the earliest settled parts of any city are likely to fall.

Mr. Freeman had seen, long before, that this quarter was left too much to itself, by people of reformatory and philanthropic inclinations; and he had cast about, at times, for some efficient plan of reaching the people who dwelt here. As it became evident to him that his stay in Emmanuel Church was to terminate soon, he had gone over this waste territory more carefully, and tried to determine its stratification, its defences, and its most promising features. Very near the heart

of the region he found a rusty-looking old structure, which proved, on closer inspection, to be an abandoned chapel now used for the storage of merchandise. The paint was off the building, but the structure itself was in good weatherproof condition. The steeple had been taken down, and the interior stripped of all ecclesiastical furnishings. After making a good survey of the premises, Mr. Freeman had inquired and learned the owner's name; then he went to his trusted adviser, Mr. Marshall, as truly and stanchly his friend now as when the former official relations existed between them. The building was the property of a business man, not personally known to the minister, but known to Mr. Marshall; and, as Mr. Freeman explained his plan of opening some hall for religious and educational work, near the site of this disused chapel, Mr. Marshall at once saw the advantages which such a building offered, and silently made some plans of his own. These plans resulted in the quiet purchase of the property by Mr. Marshall and another man, and the renting it to Mr. Freeman on nominal terms.

Thus was accomplished a change which was very important for Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, and for the neighborhood into which they removed; for they rented three or four rooms, in a fairly wholesome part of the north side, and took up their abode in them. They did not keep house, because they desired to conform as nearly as possible to the social and household customs around them; and, to do that, Mrs. Freeman would have been obliged to dispense with all domestic workers, and cook and wash and keep the house in order. This she promptly said she was not willing to do; she preferred to give her time and strength to other kinds of work which interested her more, for which she was fitted, by her college training, — work which brought her in some

small pecuniary returns. So they rented rooms, prepared their own breakfast of rolls and coffee, or chocolate, and took their noon meal at restaurants or hotels. As to their evening meal they sometimes prepared it for themselves, sometimes they took it at a hotel; but more and more frequently they found themselves invited out to tea or dinner by friends. Thus they settled into the characteristic life around them, as quietly as possible. It was really "college settlement" life, although the Freemans saw no need of giving it any special label whatever. They stored a part of their furniture and pictures and other household property, keeping only what was of the simplest construction, in order that they might eliminate, as far as possible, seeming differences between themselves and their neighbors. To this same end they sorted out their pictures and other ornamental furnishings, keeping those which were really beautiful and suggestive, but were also inexpensive; this, too, they did with regard to wall-paper; Mrs. Freeman carefully chose really tasteful and positive tints and patterns; which proved to be much in contrast with the neutral, dingy styles in adjacent households, but actually cost less. Then, when neighbors came in, as they very soon did, and rather openly admired one and another article or arrangement in the rooms, Mrs. Freeman was quick to explain how little they cost; and thus she influenced the people around her, by open example and by quiet indirect instruction, to make their homes more attractive, and thus to compete more effectually with the bar-rooms of the neighborhood.

There was a novelty about their new life, which made it almost like a visit and residence in London or Rome; and they found their time more and more fully occupied, although in ways very different from those of a regular

minister and minister's wife. Mr. Freeman had readily yielded to Mr. Marshall's suggestion of taking a few pupils in philosophy; and Ned Marshall, with two other young business men, came once or twice a week in the evenings to study these subjects. Olive Marshall, with three or four girl friends, came one afternoon in a week to read Latin with Mr. Freeman, and one afternoon to study literature — English, French, and German — with Mrs. Freeman. Besides, Mr. Freeman found more time now for the writing of magazine articles on sociological subjects (and, indeed, found excellent material all about him), and also obtained a position as regular correspondent of a Western weekly newspaper. His father had written him, and both understood that at any time during this severe stress of resignation and removal, if the son merely expressed the wish, his father would be able to put him in the line of election to some college or academic work. But Lawrence Freeman was as earnest as ever in his devotion to the real heart of his profession, which is "ministry," "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," he was fond of quoting. He knew, without affectation or morbid self-consciousness, that he had great stores of sympathy for human beings who were suffering physical privation, or mental or spiritual maladjustment; and he was determined to shape his course, if possible, so as to give a field for this kind of true ministration. He frankly said that he was not fitted for service in a society like Emmanuel Church, but he hoped to find himself better suited to this new field of need. His heart had been much comforted, on leaving his parish, by the letters and messages which came, not from men like Dr. Mixer and Mr. Blaney, nor women like Miss Metcalf, but from sundry obscure people, aged or infirm or forlorn, who wrote or spoke warmly and earnestly and concretely of the ways in

which he had helped them. Thus he saw that he had not failed, utterly, in what he knew — judged by the highest Christian standards — was the real work of his profession.

This rather unusual and persistent clinging of his to the clerical part of his present work showed itself in other ways. Many men, clergymen and laymen, had gone into work of this sort at various times and in various places; there was little that was really new in his plans. He was well aware, however, that the successful issue of his experiment would rest, not on any system or method, but on him personally, on both him and his wife as individuals. And he unconsciously rejoiced in the field now offered him for the resolute, dominating exercise of his powers of organization and management. He enjoyed the challenge which this new work held forth to him; and he realized that so far as he could take hold of the neighborhood, and take hold of human beings personally, and arouse them and raise their standards of purity — physical and mental and moral — and their intellectual pursuits and social amusements, that far and no farther would his work be real and fruitful.

Usually, in projecting such "settlement work" (if named it must be), men and women have yielded too much to the secular demands of the people around them, and have too often omitted (so Lawrence Freeman believed) the distinctly worshipful part. Such workers have too weakly, and without sufficient analysis, conceded weight to what seemed to them the rational instincts of the people whom they sought to raise; and thus have mistakenly relinquished direct appeals to the spiritual aspirations of those people. The truth, as Freeman understood the situation, was that such diseased and perverted natures should no more be blindly

yielded to, in their disproportionate demands for certain elements of civilized life, and in their condemnation and repudiation of certain other elements, than should a person who was physically ill. It is for the physician of bodies and the physician of souls, both, to determine, according to their best sympathies and judgments, what is needed by the persons whom they would restore to physical or moral or spiritual health. Therefore, when the young minister, in his new environment, heard the usual clamor for social justice, or a bitter denunciation of "psalm-singing piety," he met it with calmness, not arousing opposition by unwise argument, neither hastily and weakly yielding his own deep conviction, which was — that much of that kind of opposition was due, not to moral, reasonable, just causes, but to personal experience of harshness at some individual's hands, and to excessive reaction against particular phases of hypocrisy. Accordingly, his purpose was to correct such social disquiet, by the education of these persons in the inflexible laws of social and political life, and by arousing also the instincts of worship which he believed were in every soul, and then meeting and satisfying those devotional instincts with the means of private and public worship. To these ends he prepared himself and his chapel for work in classes, on subjects of economic, hygienic, and sociological interest, and he also distinctly emphasized the need and privilege of public worship. He renovated the chapel, and had rooms in it partitioned off for classes in various departments of secular education, and the main room he refurnished, simply but tastefully, as a place for dignified, solemn worship. Heartily seconded by the wise and friendly owners of the property, he had the chapel colored attractively, and he even so far departed from conventional ecclesiastical customs as to put a number

of pictures on its walls. These pictures were mainly large photographs, and each taught some moral or religious lesson, and many of them he used as illustrations in his sermons and addresses. He was willing to use hand-bills and placards, in order to bring his lectures and services to the attention of the public, but never pushed this advertising beyond the bounds of propriety. He counted on a certain initial attendance of many persons who would come from curiosity; but, for permanent attendance and loyalty of support, he depended on his own and his wife's personal influence and example, as the earnest character of their purposes should become known.

On this basis of a broad and sound education of all the sides of man's nature — physical, mental, moral, and spiritual — Mr. Freeman went forward in his new field of labor. And his simple, earnest, resolute, and yet sympathetic ways gradually dispelled suspicions, and gained friends for himself and adherents for his work. Many of his warm friends in Emmanuel Church lent their aid; but while he gladly and gratefully accepted such aid, he expressly told them that they still owed allegiance to that church. He was unaffectedly anxious that in its choice of his successor they should act wisely; and he stood ready, if asked, to give any counsel which lay in his power. His position was a delicate one, wounded as he had been by his harsh experience and by the conduct of many of that society's strongest supporters; but he strove with his bitter feelings and conquered them, and hoped to see another succeed where he had sadly failed. Leaving him, then, for the present, busily engaged in his interesting and encouraging work among these people of "the highways and hedges," let us see how Emmanuel Church determined upon a new leader.

CHAPTER VII

HUNTING MINISTERS

"And Micah said unto the Levite, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest; and I will give unto thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in." — Judges xvii. 10.

THE festival of Emmanuel Church was a great success, at least financially; but, pray, what other kind of success could possibly be expected, in connection with it? Ah, social success! Considered as a unit, as a totality, there was only one kind of expectancy regarding it — that of revenue; but, individually considered, there were many possibilities which were not realized, many fond hopes of established social intimacies which died in the bud. The excitement faded out; the several hundred dollars which had been gathered and enjoyed, in the respective committees, now were reluctantly transferred to Mr. Pidge, the treasurer; and in many households there were exhausted nerves, and several physicians gained new cases of rheumatism and neuralgia.

Financially and collectively a success; but, socially and individually, — not much to speak of. A majority of the women who had pushed the enterprise through had done so from two simple and creditable motives: one was zeal for the maintenance of the church, and the other was that fever and fury of battle which sustains the prize-fighter, and the soldier, and the millionnaire who seeks to add another million to his first one. So these women,

releasing themselves, for a brief period, from the monotony of sweeping and cooking, had rejoiced in finding the old line true, that "the blood more stirs to rouse a lion than to start a hare." They had deserved to be dubbed "geniuses," for they had "toiled terribly." But now it was over, and Mr. Pidge stood guardian over all their earnings; and, with a sigh, these "faithful workers" took up again the broom and the needle, husbands reasserted their old-time authority, and nothing remained in the parish households to testify to the glory of the now faded festival, except now and then a pie underbaked, or a buttonless shirt overlooked.

This statement applies to the really loyal, self-sacrificing part of the church and congregation. As for the ambitious, jealous portion, they had little or nothing left, as a residuum of the sparkling social cup which had been held to their lips. Miss Metcalf had skilfully arranged the committees, entirely with reference to the work she could get out of them; and results had testified to her good judgment. Now that the festival was over, these various groups fell apart, since the centripetal force of a common mercenary purpose had ceased to unite them, and the usual centrifugal force of society's ceaseless whirl drove them apart. All up and down the stairway of social position there were now interesting and sometimes painful episodes. Introductions among members of committees had been followed by intimacies, as earnest discussions of ways and means went forward. Courtesies had been exchanged, invitations given, and friendships had sprung up, with all the speed of the mango tree under the Indian juggler's cloth; but, alas, like the mango they disappeared with celerity. Perhaps the only change in any of the centres of social equilibrium was that of Mrs. Bellaire. She had really gained ground; she had made a step upward. Miss Metcalf,

the day after the festival, coolly disregarded most of the relationships called forth by its duties; but, with reference to Mrs. Bellaire, she had decided to allow a more permanent intercourse. She condescendingly permitted herself to be "known" by the ambitious, rich, handsome woman; and within a week after the festival the two had exchanged calls — "really social calls, you know" — and the friendship or, better, alliance assumed substantial and promising proportions.

Mrs. Bellaire, like her own costly house on its corner lot, had an outlook in several directions. The house looked out on various streets, of various degrees of respectability; likewise did Mrs. Bellaire, the rich plumber's wife, look forth socially on several "sets," of varying degrees of eminence and prestige. And with this new relationship established between herself and Miss Metcalf (that twig highest on the society tree), Mrs. Bellaire now ruthlessly severed connection with two or three persons presumably below her, whose friendship she had previously been glad to possess. Among these, thus "cut off without even a shilling," was Mrs. Train, who had hoped for many things from Mrs. Bellaire, and had zealously cultivated her. Now, alas, Mrs. Train, living on a side street, and occasionally "taking in sewing," was passed on the sidewalk with a cool nod, by her former friend, and received no more invitations to "run in any time." Poor Mrs. Train! Your efforts have been fruitless and your time wasted. Why have you not learned, before this, that, however the Christian path of life may be a "strait and narrow way," too often, alas, the elect ones of Christian society must dwell on the broad highway, and, if possible, in houses on corner lots. And as for your hoping to attain the high levels of "the best society," while you sew cotton and silk together for purposes of warmth and decency, yes, and then sell those articles, or hire out your

labor, — well, you simply cannot do it. But if only you will dawdle with worsteds or silks, over embroidery to be given away, or even to be sold for twice its value at the Universal Reform Society's Bazaar, why, that is entirely permissible; and Mrs. Grundy, society's beadle, will relax her vigilance at society's iron gate, and nod sleepily in the sunshine as you pass through.

However, the worst was over; the church and town were again in a normal condition, and the parish committee, Dr. Mixer, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Blaney, Mr. Pidge, and one or two others, were "on the war-path after ministers." That was the picturesque and dignified way in which facetious Mr. Blaney expressed it, whenever the subject came up; and it came up often, easily, and naturally, wherever Mr. Blaney was; if not, he brought it up, by force. For Mr. Blaney was feverishly happy in the exercise of his official functions as "Committee of One to provide candidates." He had more leisure than had any one else on the parish committee; he was restless, and suggestive, and ambitious of power. You would have thought that he carried the destinies of empires in his hands, as he walked along the street; and when he closed his jaw with an impressive firmness of resolve, the stubby white beard on his chin hid the weak recession of that feature, and he looked, with his corrugated brow, really Bismarckian.

Some of the more substantial and conservative members of the parish agreed with the counsel given to Mr. Marshall by the retiring pastor, that the vacancy be filled as soon as possible, and that advice and suggestions be asked of several of the leading clergymen of the denomination. These sensible members of the parish knew, by experience, that the period of candidating is injurious to the best life of any church; they had seen the harm of it, on previous occasions, when the entire congregation

sat, Sunday after Sunday, at what purported to be a service of divine worship, but really was a "committee of the whole," a sort of enlarged jury, watchful and critical, with all worshipful emotions driven away, and the always dangerous faculty of fault-finding temporarily in control.

Therefore these sensible and anxious people, dreading the fall of the spiritual thermometer which always results at such times (and usually rises very slowly and feebly afterward) — these persons hoped for a brief period of candidating, and urged methods which would tend to shorten it.

Little did those who urged this reflect upon the nature and tendencies of Mr. Wilbur Blaney, "Committee of Supplies." Could they for one moment suppose that he, having once grasped the sceptre of power, would so easily lay it down? Not he. He had always dearly loved power, had abused it when he obtained it, and rarely had it been bestowed on him by the same person or organization a second time. However, there he was, clothed with authority to invite and reject applicants, to say absolutely who should or should not occupy the pulpit of Emmanuel Church, for one or more Sundays. "The power of the keys" was his temporarily, and he jingled and jangled them on every occasion, public or private. "Choose a pastor soon?" No, indeed. He did not believe in such haste. "Let's go slow," he said frequently, his zeal getting the better of his diction; and again, with what seemed to himself surprising business sagacity, when he was with Dr. Mixer or Mr. Marshall, he laid his forefinger beside his nose, winked knowingly, and remarked, "Candidating on Sunday costs less than supporting a minister all the week; chance now for Emmanuel Church to catch up with itself." Which was good management, from the treasury point of view, for

a brief period; but was very short-sighted economy when the real growth and welfare of the church was considered. The one secret thorn that pricked Mr. Blaney, as he went forward in his important duties, was the annoying certainty that sooner or later somebody must be chosen. But that dreaded day of his own undoing he was resolved to put as far away as possible. Meanwhile, what candidates were available?

So soon as the fact of Mr. Freeman's resignation had become noised abroad, letters had begun to come in, some to Dr. Mixer, some to Mr. Pidge, and many to Mr. Freeman. These letters were now all turned over to Mr. Blaney, and he soon possessed himself of their contents. Many of the letters came directly from ministers, asking permission to preach for a Sunday in the vacant pulpit. Some of these applicants were already occupying pulpits, but the majority were not. Certain of the letters were from persons asking an opportunity for clerical friends to be heard. A part of the letters were brief and dignified, a few of them were servile and boastful. Taking them all in one bundle, Mr. Blaney thoughtfully crowded them into a pigeonhole of his desk, and wrote, inviting a country minister whom he had listened to the summer before, — said minister being rough in manner and crude in ideas, and not in the least likely to prove acceptable to the congregation. This diversion would give the "Committee on Supplies" time to frame — not his attack, but rather his defence; for somebody was destined to get through his fortifications sooner or later, and Mr. Blaney simply aimed at postponing surrender as long as possible.

He wrote and mailed his letter as soon as possible. Then on his way home he happened to meet Mr. Marshall. Of course the all-important subject of candidates was broached. Mr. Marshall let fall the remark

that Mr. Freeman had mentioned a friend of his, named Meade, as an excellent minister, and one likely to fill the pulpit creditably. In all matters of business Mr. Marshall had an unerring instinct, and could lead men and forestall events with great accuracy; but in religious affairs, or rather in affairs ecclesiastical, he was liable to err, through the very sincerity and earnestness of his own devout and humble spiritual nature, which was much stronger and deeper — "free thinker" as he was often called — than most of those who thus unfairly judged him. So, in such matters as the conduct of public worship, and even in matters correlated with it, he moved sometimes a little blindly — as in this case, when one day he suggested to Mr. Blaney the advisability of inviting this friend of Mr. Freeman's to preach, adding that Mr. Freeman thought him a very promising candidate.

Mr. Blaney took alarm instantly, and Mr. Marshall at once noted it in the excitable, wilful, vain man, but did not understand its cause. Mr. Blaney replied, with an excessive blandness and volubility which betrayed his uneasiness, that he would give the matter his immediate consideration. The two men parted, and Mr. Blaney faced his little problem alone; the problem being how to comply with this suggestion of Mr. Marshall's and Mr. Freeman's, yet not to bring his own dictatorship to a close. The upshot of his deliberations was that he invited Mr. Meade for the second Sunday, rather shrewdly soliloquizing that the parish, the congregation, was little likely to choose one of the earlier candidates, but would wish to wait and see what might be in store for them. Therefore, Mr. Blaney decided that if this rather attractive Mr. Meade must be allowed in front of the congregation at all, it were best that he come as soon as possible.

This plan was followed; and after the first raw rustic candidate had pounded the pulpit cushions to his satisfaction, for the first Sunday, Mr. Meade appeared, on the second Sunday, and received an attentive hearing. "He came, he saw," and was seen — but he did not conquer. He was a man of good ability, and possessed of high standards; but Emmanuel Church — as Mr. Blaney astutely had foreseen — was so expectant of marvellous eloquence, had its hopes pitched at so high a key, that only a Chrysostom or a Whitefield could have satisfied it at that early stage of the candidating period. Later, this Mr. Meade might have been welcomed, after the hard facts of human imperfection had been exemplified from the pulpit a dozen or more Sundays. But at present there was not the slightest chance that any preacher would suit. The congregation sat in sphinx-like silence, with the cool indifference and the haughty sense of power which characterized the old-time assemblage in the Colosseum as gladiators fought to make a Roman holiday. Unconsciously they showed the same love of power which animated Mr. Blaney, and, like him, they were in no way eager to terminate the candidating, for this would end their own brief judicial career.

There were many intricacies and professional subtleties connected with the delicate matter of candidating, some of which were creditable and some were not. Mr. Blaney, as "Committee on Supplies," learned more or less of them, in the course of his reign. One of these niceties was that a minister should not be invited to come and "candidate" at a church. No. Mr. Blaney had perceived the need of euphemism, by the time he had read through a half dozen of the earliest applications and replies to his own invitations. No minister replied that he would come and "preach as

a candidate." Not he. He would, however, be most happy to "occupy the pulpit," or to "act as supply," or to "preach," but was "not to be considered as a candidate" — and so on. Yet every one of them (or nearly so) was eager to be called to the vacant pulpit, and knew, from the beginning to the end of his appearance at the church, that he was on trial. Occasionally some self-respecting minister, on receiving one of Mr. Blaney's mandatory epistles, replied briefly that his work and his character were open to examination, on week days and Sundays, in his own parish and pulpit; and if a committee from Emmanuel Church desired to visit him in his church, or consult his parish committee, he would give them a cordial welcome or aid them to make thorough inquiries.

This was on the highest level of ministerial dignity and delicacy, and it was the soundest level on which the search for a minister could have been conducted, and, indeed, is conducted, by the most cultivated and most intelligent parishes; but such a method would have defeated Mr. Blaney's plans and undermined his power and pleasure. Besides, it was "too much trouble," he argued with Dr. Mixer; so they voted the writers of such letters "prigs and upstarts," and Mr. Blaney at once found evidence, or manufactured it, to prove that those ministers were of an inferior quality.

Thus the Sundays passed, and each brought some novelty before the eyes and ears of the congregation. It was nothing less than ecclesiastical vaudeville; and, in that case, the demand and taste for it in Emmanuel Church coincided with that of the theatre public at large; which, as everybody knows, has found serious, thoughtful, artistic plays somewhat a burden, and has declared, by the clink of its silver and gold, for the "continuous performance."

The congregation, for a time, greatly enjoyed — or seemed to enjoy — that kind of entertainment which Wilbur Blaney, Esq., agent, was furnishing. In proof of this, Mr Blaney noted — and was not backward in calling attention to the same — that the congregations had appreciably enlarged. There was another change, however, which he did not notice, and that was in the quality of the attention which the congregation gave. Before the candidating began, most people came in quietly, reverently, some of them bowing their heads for a moment in prayer; and throughout the service showed a sense of participation in the same by voice or attentive manner. Now it had become different; there was an aloofness, a critical flavor about the assemblage, which manifested itself in many unpleasant ways. The gainers by the change seemed to be the organist and choir; for they, in the past, had been continuously found fault with; but their shortcomings were quite overlooked, in the general zeal to find some flaw in the occupant of the pulpit.

There was a comedy side and a tragedy side, also, to it all. "Life is a comedy to him who thinks; to him who feels, it is a tragedy." Therefore, from the congregation's point of view, this was comedy, for the congregation's heart, with its love and worship, had been temporarily laid aside; and its head, its thinking, critical part, had the leadership.

Be it said, however, for truth's sake, that this lamentable lowering of ideals was not characteristic of the entire congregation, perhaps not numerically of a majority; there were many people, of a quiet, unobtrusive sort, who really came to church to be helped over hard places, to gain strength in their troubles and trials, to be lifted out of sordid levels, and to catch anew the vision of the "unseen realities." Such people were

disappointed and depressed; but although they formed a considerable part of the church, they made but slight demonstration of their feelings, and waited in silence for the dawn of a brighter day.

So the more demonstrative, more commercial, elements in the church seemed to be more numerous than they really were; they asserted themselves at every turn, and practically controlled the situation. These persons enjoyed their Sundays as never before, and did greatly increase the size of the congregations. There were smiles, at times, as funny things happened in the pulpit. One preacher, who ventured to deliver a sermon which evidently was not of recent preparation, and had not been looked over, spoke warmly of a presidential election as just occurring, which had really taken place three years before; and, a little later in the sermon, he lost his place among the disordered leaves of his manuscript, and was obliged ignominiously to stop and take several minutes to rearrange the confused mass. Such pleasant episodes sent ripples of laughter over the congregation, and made the time pass very pleasantly.

Concerning every minister who occupied the pulpit, there were a half dozen differing opinions. One liked this kind of sermon, and others liked that kind; some demanded manuscript preaching, others believed in emancipation from the same. One preacher shouted so loudly as to deafen the five front pews, but delighted the hearts of some aged and deaf persons who sat in the rear of the church, and would persist in sitting there, because of old associations. These individuals had not heard the whole of the sermon, but were greatly gratified with the sturdy preacher's stentorian voice, which had kept them from slumber, really arousing their aural tympana into pleasurable vibration.

Bad as the whole affair was, — this prolonged can-

didating, — it was no worse, *per se*, than was the old nomination of Roman candidates for office, or the modern campaigning of would-be governors and senators. The great harm of it was in the lowered *morale* of the congregation; inasmuch as the bid for votes, on the part of these clerical candidates, was not made in a market-place, or forum, or public hall, as in affairs political, but in a place and on a day commonly set apart for higher and more spiritual ends; thus the sanctities of public worship were set aside, disregarded, even permanently uprooted.

Still, looking at this weekly exhibition from its comedy or congregational side, it may be said that there were many interesting situations. One preacher was much liked by a large number of people, because he had a beautiful baritone voice, and took magnificent lead of the congregational hymns. Another had his sermon as full of quotations from famous authors as a Christmas pudding is full of plums, and his profound learning was deeply impressed upon many minds, — they had never seen "Allibone's Prose Quotations." Also, one gentleman of commanding presence made use of a few and very long quotations from Burke, Fox, Cicero, and other classic orators; and he gave these long declamations with grand effect, each being admirable in itself, but in no very evident way being related to the others. This man bade fair to gain a large following, until Mrs. Guthrie's comment gained currency, to the effect that nobody needed to come to church to hear Cicero, and Burke, and others declaimed, for these could be read at home.

Another of the more promising candidates was a rough, awkward young fellow, who had a natural aptitude for public speaking, and had something worth saying; but, unfortunately, he occasionally departed,

in his earnest exhortations, from the very well written manuscript before him, and interpolated some purely extempore sentences; and in these his language fell short of the smoothness and precision of his written discourse. Therefore, although these interpolations were evidently burning utterances, from a sincere heart, the critical jury before him saw — or thought they saw — or thought their neighbors saw — a misuse of the English language. Accordingly, their feelings of propriety were ruffled, and a considerable number of people pursed their lips with protestation, and did not unlock them until after the benediction, when they could freely express their dislike for the raw young orator. However, this horror of the preacher's English was not shared by all. "Language? Language? Trouble with his language?" exclaimed old Cy' Colburn. "Why, that's it, is it? Now I didn't notice nothin' wrong. But there! I hain't never had no trouble with my language."

One of the candidates was a person who might have made a good showing in the political field, and possessed the instincts of a born diplomat. On accepting Mr. Blaney's now proper and conventional invitation to "supply the pulpit," he inquired for a "year-book," or church manual, if there were such an annual publication. This being forwarded to him, he happily found in it a subscription-list to some charity. This list, with amounts opposite names, gave the clever young man a fairly correct key to the sources of financial revenue in the parish. He preached very acceptably on Sunday; and then on Monday, equipped with this list, he made a great many "social calls." It was a well-laid plan, and might have resulted more satisfactorily to the misplaced young plenipotentiary, but for one counter influence. He had carefully sounded — as he thought

— Mr. Blaney, regarding the theological temper of the church; and he had been warmly assured by the Machiavellian "Committee on Supplies" (who had suspected his scheme) that a large proportion of the people were very conservative, very conservative indeed (which statement happened to be the exact opposite of the fact).

Enough said. The hopeful young candidate put his radical and progressive sermon deep down into his travelling-bag, and used his discourse on "The Nature and Tendency of Sin," wherein he quoted Moses and Calvin, agreed with Augustine and Edwards, declared boldly for a personal devil, had several sulphurous suggestions of — not "Sheol" nor "Hades" but "Hell"; and ended, red faced and wet eyed, with a violent appeal to all to "make their calling and election sure," and to "flee from the wrath to come."

That was where he failed in his own calling and election, at least in Emmanuel Church, which prided itself on its advanced views, and liked a pinch of science in most sermons, and a friendly reference to some famous picture or sonata. So the reverend gentleman wended his fruitless way around among the homes and business offices, but was received with a coolness and apathy which perplexed and disheartened him; and he left town, two trains earlier than he had intended.

Thus the continuous performance went on, Sunday after Sunday. There were objections to every candidate. One man was "awfully tall," and another was "dreadfully short." One wore a necktie with a red tint in it, and another did not have his hair smoothed properly. A certain young fellow, blessed with an abundance of brown hair, wore it brushed so smoothly and compactly, that "Sister" Jennings and "Sister"

Moulton, as they walked home together, discussed the question, all the way, as to whether or not the young candidate wore a wig. "Sister" Moulton had good reason to know the arts of arrangement and concealment in that form of head decoration; and she therefore spoke with authority. But she spoke guardedly, not too freely, lest her companion should suspect her of wearing one; thus she preserved, as she thought with great cleverness, a secret which had been a patent fact to the congregation so long that it had ceased to be interesting.

Among the candidates it was inevitable that there should be at least one of those wearisome occupants of pulpits, who are commonly known as "scholarly preachers." Given that brief description, any person of experience could add certain other characteristics. This particular man wore glasses, because his sight was poor. At once the congregation assumed that his impaired vision had been caused by excessive devotion to profound studies. He was slow and painstaking also in movements and in speech. This arose from a natural stupidity of mind; but to the congregation it meant an absorption in recondite and spiritual fields of thought. He preached a sermon which was never above the commonplace, and delivered it in a tone that never rose out of a soporific monotone. Occasionally he paused, after some profound observation, like "We must all die," or "Every man has his cares," and gazed intently down over the assembly, to make sure that they were grasping the full meaning of his ideas. At such awful moments the sudden cessation of his droning voice waked up many of those who were quietly and unostentatiously slumbering, and they hastily tried to get into touch with the spectacled oracle beaming patiently upon them.

This candidate, the "scholarly man," had no observable faults and no noticeable merits. Everybody murmured, on going out, "How scholarly!" and nobody, for his life, could have told what he meant by the expression; but one thing was evident, however, and that was that Emmanuel Church approved the man, but did not desire to settle him — had not the slightest notion of it.

All this was the "comedy" side of the situation. This was the aspect of the candidating period, from the merely intellectual and critical point of view; but to those who could feel, as well as perceive, there was a serious and even tragic element in much of it. There, for instance, was the young man, pale, thin, high-keyed in voice, impassioned in spirit, who preached a sermon that had no meaning whatever to men like Dr. Mixer and Blaney; but Mr. Marshall divined and Mrs. Guthrie quickly understood that he was singing a death-song to them that day. The truth was that he had economized so closely in the theological seminary, had lived on so small an amount of food, and worn such thin clothing, and worked so excessively, that he had undermined his vitality; and the fervor with which he spoke was that of the hectic invalid, and his point of view was heaven, rather than earth. There was no possibility that such a person could be selected, and he came and went like a spirit, and his pure and holy message was long remembered — as was our Lord's — by "those who could hear it."

Again, there was the candidate, a former college mate of Freeman's, who came to his house on the north side on Monday morning, after his Sunday duty, and was of course warmly welcomed. Each called the other by the last name, and both enjoyed the renewal of old school ties; but the gayety in the visitor's manner was

a forced gayety, and the cause of this presently transpired. He was a steady-going, right-minded man, but had never advanced, in the path of promotion, beyond the little seaside hamlet and wooden chapel in which he had first settled, on graduating. There he was respected and loved, but the salary was small and his family was large. Several times Lawrence had heard of his candidating in various larger parishes, but always he had returned to his little round of duty among the fishermen. Just how he had been included in the list of candidates for Emmanuel Church, Mr. Freeman did not know; but here he was, looking forlorn, in his rusty coat, and with a wistful, patient expression on his thin, careworn face. After the usual inquiries had been made, he broke a somewhat prolonged silence by saying timidly, "I am awfully sorry to ask it, Freeman, but I am really obliged to; you see — er — I — I haven't the money to pay my car-fare back home. It costs about four dollars and a half; and I thought, I thought — that the committee would pay me the usual fee this morning; but Mr. Blaney has gone —"

"Well, that's all right, all right," interrupted Freeman, in a friendly and careless way, as if such a trifle need not be delayed over. And taking out his purse he handed his old friend a five-dollar bill. This was received with a burst of grateful expression, and the candidate was led to open his heart to his host, and tell him some of his discouragements and trials. Lawrence always unconsciously drew forth, from people in trouble, such confidences; his nature was so strong and sincere, yet tender, that a person quickly felt, in his presence, the certainty of a sympathetic response. The narrative was a touching one: the young man had gone forth from his theological studies, with idealistic views, with high purposes for helping the world, and had been

wounded by rebuffs, cast down by misunderstandings, plunged into debt by sickness, and by poor management, as he confessed frankly. He had given up hope for his own professional preferment; and his one aim now was to advance his children, by education, so that they might make more of a success than he had made. Hardly forty years old as he was, he seemed like a broken old man; and Freeman pitied him, from the bottom of his heart.

Well, he went his way. Emmanuel Church had no idea of calling him.

They had tacitly agreed, as they left church, that "he had no spirit," and Dr. Mixer expressed it even more tersely and forcibly. Thus they decided; and knew not that the man was weak in body from lack of good food, and cast down in soul because of baffled hopes and overwhelming anxieties concerning his little family.

One other candidate may properly here be singled out, among the more pathetic cases. It was that of a man, aged about fifty-five years, who was prematurely gray haired, but was still in full possession of his faculties and of a rich store of experience which would have made him a trusted pastor and counsellor fifty years before, but now his whitish-gray locks condemned him. Mr. Blaney had not been forewarned about his age, else he would not have invited him; still, the man came among the first half of the applicants, and when, as yet, the "Committee on Supplies" was not eager to obtain "first-rate talent." Gray as Mr. Blaney himself was, he had no mercy for a gray-haired candidate. His theory, as expressed to Dr. Mixer, was that they must have a "bright, smart, lively young man, one that would make things jump." In which standard of apostolic excellence he coincided with the grocer down the street, who made it a rule "never to hire a man over thirty

years of age, because after that age men couldn't move fast enough to keep up with his trade." "Movement" being the desideratum, and speed taking precedence over thoroughness and honesty, there was little chance for a noble, disciplined manhood, either in the grocery trade or in the pulpit of Emmanuel Church. This was substantially what Mr. Blaney said to the dignified man, as he "paid him off," Sunday night. Usually the supply fee was sent by mail, early in the week, after the service was rendered. Mr. Marshall — coached by Mr. Freeman, who distrusted Blaney's methods — had insisted on this plan; but Blaney had a mean, cruel, streak in him, like that which makes a bully browbeat and insult a weaker man. And in revenge for the candidate's having signs of age upon him, he "paid him off" personally, that Sunday evening, and used the occasion to drop sundry spiteful remarks — all of which the man took in silence, in patience; for he had suffered much because of this whitening of his hair, in a profession which too often demands wisdom and zeal, enthusiasm and ripened experience, and, in short, all the virtues of youth and age combined, mutually contradictory as such qualities usually are.

However, Mr. Blaney's reign was fast drawing toward a close. He saw signs of insubordination, at times, and disregarded them as long as he could. But Mr. Marshall and Mrs. Guthrie each had consulted certain outside leaders, in other churches, and had quietly suggested two or three names. One of these Mr. Blaney had reluctantly allowed to fill the pulpit for a Sunday; and was much relieved when, on awaking Sunday morning, he had found a heavy rain falling. His experience had taught him correctly that on such a day the spirits of the congregation would be depressed, the entire service would be more or less forlorn, and the blame would be

laid on whatever minister happened to be unlucky enough to occupy the pulpit that day.

So it resulted, and an excellent sermon fell on ears that could not hear, and good seed dropped into hearts which, that day, despite the moisture without, were dry and barren. So this really capable, effective, and earnest candidate went away, and little interest in him was expressed by anybody.

Mr. Blaney's reign, or regency, was drawing to a close, nevertheless. And the congregation was now in the condition which Mr. Freeman had foreseen. It was divided and subdivided into numerous groups, each of which had "liked" a particular candidate, and had set its collective face and its aggregate will against every other candidate than its own. Each group was now "lying low," with more or less patience, for the end of the list to be reached, in order that then it might push the claims of its particular candidate.

After considerable pressure the candidating was declared "over," and a meeting of the parish was called. Then another, and another. And no sort of agreement was reached. The various groups were out in full force, and canvassing went forward with a vigor and a publicity which would have put to shame any political campaign. One energetic man, possessed of more vigor than taste, being convinced that his favorite was really preferred by a majority, if only a full expression of opinion could be obtained, sent out a printed notice to every person in the parish; moreover, being possessed of no more money than of taste and delicacy, he sent the notice on a postal card; and the public mails distributed, one morning, to a hundred or more addresses, postal cards, asking, in large print: —

DO YOU VOTE FOR REV. JOHN JONES ? YES ? OR NO ?
(Please mark with a cross !)

Luckily for his peace of mind, the Rev. John Jones was peacefully and contentedly ministering to his flock, fifty miles away; and, as the enterprising attempt failed, he never heard of it. But this brutal plan roused Miss Metcalf, who, of all the parish — Mrs. Guthrie excepted — may be accredited with the most refined and cultivated standards of propriety; and she straightway set about a little plan of her own, which she had nourished, silently, for a considerable time. And her plan it was which resulted in giving to Emmanuel Church a pastor; her clever management brought about the settlement of that man, who proved to be — what all were so anxiously desiring — "A pulpit success."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONQUERING HERO COMES

"Time was we stoned the prophets, age on age,
When men were strong to save, the world hath slain them.
People are wiser, now; they waste no rage,
The prophets entertain them."

— CHARLOTTE PERKINS STETSON.

IT had happened, a few weeks before the holding of the unfruitful parish meetings, that Miss Metcalf had visited a friend, in a distant town, and had remained there over a Sunday. She had liked the preacher at her friend's church fairly well, but, as the day was a cloudy one, and some parish celebration had occurred on the evening before, the pews of the church were not well filled, and all present, in pew and pulpit and choir, showed a lowered vitality, which made an unfavorable impression on the visitor. But after the service she had yielded to her friend's suggestion and had gone forward to meet the minister; and he had bowed low to her and had allowed a little trace of admiration to show itself in his face, as she presented her snowy hair and black eyes and graceful figure before him. Beyond that, as they conversed, it transpired that he was a cousin of her mother's second cousin, or something of that sort, and this created a slender but evident bond of sympathy between them.

Afterward, on her return home, as the parish of Emmanuel Church seemed unlikely to reach any agreement as to a pastor, Miss Metcalf bethought herself of

her pleasant interview with ——, "the cousin of her mother's second cousin," and quietly resolved that he should become the minister of Emmanuel Church. But not through Mr. Blaney's kind offices! On the contrary, she would accomplish it without that gentleman's aid or even direct approval. Her method of management was this: The next day after the third ineffectual attempt of the parish to choose from among the score or two of candidates, she appeared in Dr. Mixer's store and bought several articles — among them a bottle of the "Emollient." Also she engaged in conversation with "the Doctor," and inquired about the meeting. "Oh, my dear Miss Metcalf," said Dr. Mixer, with as much intimacy as he dared assume, "you ought to have been there; it was everybody's duty to be present." And he beamed on her with an approving smile, which was intended to mitigate the disapproval conveyed in his words; then fearing lest he might have been too bold, he added, "We needed your opinion and advice."

Miss Metcalf was very prompt in replying, with a graceful inclination of the head, "Oh, you know, Doctor, I never like to meddle in church affairs. I am devoted to the cause, of course; but I always leave matters of administration to wiser heads."

This was interesting, in view of the fact, perfectly well known to Dr. Mixer, that the straight, tall, handsome woman, who could seem so feminine and confidential and appealing, was the cleverest kind of a manipulator, in every organization to which she belonged, and dearly loved to secretly manage such organizations, without openly seeming to do so.

The subject of candidates being now on the carpet, Miss Metcalf gradually worked around to the favorable moment, when she could regret — carelessly and inad-

vertently — that the people had not heard the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay, a distant relative of hers, who was a very fine preacher and a most attractive gentleman socially.

"Married? And how much family?" inquired the druggist, succinctly, as soon as he realized that Miss Metcalf had a fixed interest in this new discovery of hers.

"Oh, he isn't married, of course," replied his visitor, with a slight surprise in her tone; though why the "of course" came in was an inviting thread of research for a trained psychologist. Then she hastily added, "And he hasn't any family, either;" which somewhat superfluous remark brought a sudden tint of color to her pale cheeks, and appreciably enhanced her severe beauty.

There was a "touchiness" — as Dr. Mixer translated it to himself — a "touchiness" on Miss Metcalf's part regarding this new man, which showed the proprietor of the famous "Emollient" how firmly her mind was made up; and he mentally ranged himself on her side, and outwardly agreed to "speak to two or three of the parish committee about the matter." At this, Miss Metcalf charmingly took alarm, and "feared that she had said too much;" and straightway begged Dr. Mixer to do nothing about it, at least at present. This he promised, and mentioned it an hour later to Mr. Marshall, whom he met at the bank. Miss Metcalf, on her way home, did precisely as Dr. Mixer knew she would do; she broached the subject to two friends, and, later in the day, in a factitious note to Mrs. Matilda Fifield, also casually referred to her distant clerical relative.

Thus was the proper machinery set in motion; and in two days the entire parish was gossiping and conjecturing about the talented unknown preacher, and everybody was desirous of hearing him. A few more days

passed, and a letter went to the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay from Dr. Mixer, "Chairman of the Parish Committee," inviting him to do Emmanuel Church the great favor of supplying its pulpit for a Sunday, if entirely convenient for him.

Convenient enough it was, but not expedient; for the worldly-wise man knew the value of "holding off" a little. So he replied with a very elaborate letter, in which he explained how highly honored he felt by the invitation, but sundry important duties prevented his complying with it at present. This letter was followed by another a week later, — Emmanuel Church meanwhile rising to a higher pitch of expectancy, — in which he intimated that on the second Sunday following he could arrange, with some difficulty, "owing to his great pressure of work," to be with them, "the Lord permitting."

Agreed! And the date was settled, the days passed, all other candidates were ignored, and the entire congregation was united, for the first time in six months, in the embrace of one emotion — in its curiosity, its hopeful curiosity, regarding this "brilliant" pulpit orator.

The exciting Sunday arrived, and so did Mr. Carnaquay. He was entertained by Miss Metcalf, and he accompanied her to church. Certainly he was impressive in appearance, as he gazed unconcernedly out over the impatiently curious congregation. He was a man of between thirty and forty years of age, tall, dark, with coarse black hair, rather long; large, black, piercing eyes, an aquiline nose, — giving him a sharp, arrowy-looking face, — and was active and confident in all his movements. He read the Bible and hymns in a free and almost nonchalant way, with a clear ringing voice.

So far he was "acceptable," though not by any

means so remarkable as many had been led to expect. Several felt a little disappointed; but all believed that the "brilliant man" had unsuspected reserves.

He had. Nobody knew better than did the much-heralded man, the reactionary force there is in too much praise and too high a state of expectancy; but he had never yet failed to meet an emergency, from any undue timidity or from inconvenient scruples. When the time for the sermon came, he reached into his pocket, drew out a manuscript, glanced at it, looked again earnestly at it, then gazed at it and at the congregation with seeming perplexity; then slowly put it back into his pocket, and an expression of firm purpose came into his face, so plainly that all could see it. (At least, he intended that all should see it; if they did not, it was not his fault.)

"My dear friends," he presently said, speaking very slowly and seriously, "I regret exceedingly to come before you, at this time, with an explanation, an apology upon my lips; but necessity compels me to entire frankness, and I am obliged to inform you that in the hurry of departure from my home, owing to the pressing character of my last few engagements, I put into my pocket, by mistake, a wrong paper, an address prepared for the Northwestern Annual Conference, — and which I had the honor to deliver before that august assemblage, a month ago. I find myself, therefore, before you, without any prepared sermon; and I must throw myself upon your kind indulgence and sympathy."

Here, many faces, which had been lengthening perceptibly, grew almost melancholy, in pity and regret; and the man in the pulpit, whom nothing ever escaped that was worth his notice, saw that he had turned the flank of their attacking line of criticism, and "had them on the run," as the free military phrase puts it. He

knew that he now had, in a small degree, perhaps, their condemnation, but in a far larger degree, their sympathy; and in either case, whichever of these emotions occupied their various minds, their aggressive, critical attitude was eliminated.

"I must throw myself upon your kind indulgence and sympathy, while I recall, as well as I can, some recent sermon." Here his mobile face changed from an expression of mild entreaty to one which conveyed a thoughtful, earnest attempt at recollecting one of those recent sermons. For a moment he stood motionless, with head slightly bowed. Most auditors thought he was engaged in an effort of memory; some thought he was engaged in prayer. Presently he lifted his head, and said, with just a little resignation showing through his well-modulated tones, "I will simply talk to you, as best I can, under the unpleasant circumstances, regarding the suggestive words of our Saviour to his apostles, as he sent them forth to preach his gospel." And, with that preface, he began his sermon. And there can be no very great breach of confidence in saying here that the sermon was exactly the one he had intended to preach, was one that he had preached several times before, and was fixed in his trained and retentive memory like printed words on the page of a book. It had been revised and enriched, with each delivery, until its Macaulayan sentences were extremely smooth and well balanced, and it abounded in epigrammatic expressions. He began it in a halting and somewhat broken manner, as one might be expected to do if he were recalling, with effort, some partly memorized material; but that hesitation of manner, having accomplished what was intended in the way of illusion, was soon laid aside, and the speaker grew more animated. He pictured the conditions of the world at the time of the apostles'

departure, and the powers and probabilities which were against it; he portrayed the mediocre natural faculties and the misgivings which those apostles must have had; then he passed to a review of the progress achieved by the new religion, its slow but sure conquest of the world, the saints it had made, the martyrs it had inspired. And finally he pictured the future, as Christianity should spread over all lands, and the cross of Christ supplant all other symbols, and every knee bow gladly at the mention of the Saviour's holy name.

There could be no question that the sermon was a good one — "a splendid effort"; and the congregation sat spell-bound and delighted. There was little or nothing in it which was likely to affect Mr. Blaney when he was disposed to say a mean thing about a friend, and nothing that would probably occur to Dr. Mixer as he filled orders for his sham "Emollient." But that was entirely aside from the purpose of the preacher and from the desire of the congregation. The congregation wished to be entertained and occasionally thrilled; and the preacher had set himself the task of doing just that, and he had succeeded. To both parties interested, that comprised "pulpit success"; and it was achieved that day. To be sure there were some striking and even startling methods used. The speaker moved about very freely, from one part of the platform to another, and even might have been said by the unsympathetic — if such had been present — to "leap" from one side to the other of the pulpit or reading-desk. There was no lack of dramatic treatment, either, as the preacher gave, verbatim, sentences which he fancied to have fallen from the lips of various historic personages, introduced at appropriate points in the discourse. Taken all together, it was as dramatic a portrayal as it could well have been, lacking scenery and properties,

and with no accompaniment of "slow music." And it was given with a fluency and confidence which aroused a slight suspicion in one or two of the more discerning listeners, like Miss Metcalf and Mrs. Guthrie; but by the vast majority it was received as a masterpiece of inspired improvisation.

Dr. Mixer, however, was not a man to be wholly carried off his feet by the clever performance, and he saw that the hour had come for a quick, decisive stroke. At the close of the sermon, the preacher offered a brief and eloquent address to the Deity, and then gave out the closing hymn. As the congregation rose to sing, Dr. Mixer made two quick journeys and held two quick conferences. He crossed over to Miss Metcalf, and they spoke a few words to each other; then he went along to Mr. Blaney's pew, and addressed a few words to him. The result of these hurried interviews was seen when Mr. Blaney walked forward, with vast dignity of demeanor and huge responsibility pictured on his face, and, at the close of the benediction and before the organ could begin playing, he addressed the congregation. He asked them to seat themselves that they might transact a matter of important business.

This was done; and the reverend performer on the platform walked slowly, and with no surprise evident in his face, from the pulpit, and disappeared in the waiting-room behind. Then there was a stream of fulsome praise from Mr. Blaney, ending in the suggestion that the congregation then and there extend a call to the Reverend Ronald Carnaquay. The suggestion met instant and hearty approval, and a unanimous rising vote testified to the persuasive power of skilful oratory and clever management, and Emmanuel Church, as a whole, was again united in thought and feeling and will.

This practically settled the matter of a choice of pastor; although there were still several technicalities to be duly met. One was the gaining the acceptance, from Mr. Carnaquay, of this "sudden and altogether unexpected call." That was the spirit in which he met the group of admiring people who rushed into the waiting-room to shake hands with him. He very much desired the "call," and certainly had "campaigned" cleverly to get it; but a too ready acquiescence in the demand for him was not as he had planned. He knew too well the desirability of being "difficult to obtain." Then, too, there was the matter of salary. He knew, to a dollar, what his predecessor had been paid, and was calmly resolved to be paid at least five hundred dollars more than that amount. So he was very gracious, very fatigued, highly honored, and all the rest, but he stiffly refused to utter the monosyllable which all so eagerly desired. He begged to be excused from deciding so weighty a matter in a hasty way, murmured something about giving the subject his "prayerful consideration," finally intimated that he did not care to prolong the interview, and went away triumphantly, with Miss Metcalf, to eat a good dinner, and to carefully reflect upon his next move.

As for that somewhat elderly but extremely well-preserved and effective spinster, she was outwardly calm and quietly sympathetic, but inwardly in a state of fluttering delight. Not only was she gratified at having her plan succeed so admirably, but the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay was proving himself, as her guest, a very agreeable person. He was certainly a handsome man, of a bold type, and he knew how to say many interesting things. He was very appreciative, too, of her extremely well-chosen and daintily served dinner; being by no means the ascetic individual which his somewhat thin figure indicated. Moreover, although the relationship

between them was of a very remote and attenuated sort, it was something; and Miss Metcalf, having formed the habit earlier in life, before her snowy charms had fully blossomed, of emphasizing the worth of "family," could not readily discard that attitude of mind. Ronald Carnaquay quickly discerned this predilection of hers, and he was very ready to gratify it to the full; and the two made rapid strides in their newly discovered relationship, Miss Metcalf even mentioning him to the cook as her cousin.

Again, she herself was no inexperienced person in the social arts, and lost no time in conveying to him her great pleasure in listening to his admirable sermon, and her unbounded hope that he would see it to be his duty to accept the call so flatteringly bestowed. In talking with her he made not the slightest reference to such base subjects as salaries and debts and changes of population and neighboring churches, but reserved these very serious matters for that conference with official representatives of the parish, which he knew would eventually come.

And such a conference did come. That evening Messrs. Mixer, Marshall, and Blaney appeared, were shown in; and, with Miss Metcalf and her guest, a half hour passed in very sympathetic conversation. At the end of that time Dr. Mixer cleared his throat significantly, made one or two vain attempts to cross his fat, podgy legs, and began, in his husky whisper, "We had an idea, Mr. Carnaquay, that it would not — would not seem — er — unseasonable to you, even though the day is the Sabbath, to — er — talk with you a little about — er — about the question of — of — er — salary."

A mild expression of surprise at once was visible on the reverend gentleman's face, although he had been momentarily expecting the subject to be broached,

ever since the first evening greetings had been exchanged.

At this mention of "salary," Miss Metcalf made a very pretty show of being ill at ease, and then exclaimed, with a delicate shyness which quite equalled Carnaquay's bit of facial work: "Oh, then I must be excused; I really must. Such matters are entirely outside my province. You will excuse me, won't you?" And she rose, and smilingly and gracefully swept out of the room.

This departure simplified a little the complicated emotions and interests of the situation, and the subject of salary was cautiously developed by Dr. Mixer, supported occasionally by Mr. Blaney. Mr. Marshall, who had uttered no more than shy monosyllables, since his entrance, added now and then a nod, when appealed to by Dr. Mixer. The conversation was of a delicate character, as Dr. Mixer knew it would be; for he had rightly surmised that the reverend gentleman was the kind of man who would be fully able to look after his own temporal and financial interests. So he was not surprised when Mr. Carnaquay, after making various inquiries which showed plenty of worldly shrewdness, underneath the somewhat Scriptural language in which they were couched, suggested a certain sum as the lowest possible amount which would be "considered" by him, in case he found, on reflection and consultation in his own parish, that his duty "led" him in the direction of Emmanuel Church.

There was no shaking him from this position, calmly taken and coolly adhered to. Side questions, like the prospective growth of their quarter of the town, the standing debt on the church, the "drawing capacity" of neighboring preachers, and similar vital topics — these were allowed to enter, at times; but whenever a return

was made to the central theme of "how much salary," there the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay was imperturbable and almost indifferent, but not at all yielding. The sum named by him was five hundred dollars in advance of Mr. Freeman's salary, and certainly, as they knew, it had been hard to raise that. Now, with this additional amount, what was to be done?

At last, having reached no definite agreement, but having wasted a great deal of breath in useless, though ingenious pleading, Dr. Mixer, with smiles and good wishes, rose to depart. The other visitors followed; and, after a general shaking of hands, Mr. Carnaquay, quite clear that he would hear from them in a few days (and "at his own figure"), went softly up to bed, and "slept the sleep of the" — well, of those persons who have few sensibilities and but little conscience.

CHAPTER IX

A CHILD OF NATURE

"Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed hath lent."
— RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

ALTHOUGH only a mile separated Lawrence Freeman and his wife from Emmanuel Church, he was often surprised to find how remote, in interest, the affairs of that parish seemed. Although he was concerned that his former church should wisely choose a pastor, and always looked in the newspaper, the first of the week, to know who had preached for them on Sunday, yet his own little world was such a different one, and his duties were so engrossing — yes, and so interesting — that Emmanuel Church seemed to him like a church in some other city.

There was a reality about his work, now, which before he had sadly missed. Emmanuel Church was made up largely of people who were quite comfortable in the possession of ample incomes; and his duties among them, except on Sundays and in the preparation for public services of worship, had been too nearly of an honorary and perfunctory character to be satisfactory to his robust and earnest nature. He had been led into the ministry by the deep desire of his heart to "minister" to real human needs; but what could he do for four-fifths of Emmanuel parish? Little of deep significance. Many hours a week were consumed in making

formal calls upon people who gained little from his calls except relief from *ennui*, and they desired no more; and the dinners and teas which he attended were pleasant enough, but such occasions rarely called forth the deeper notes in his life, and would have been as complete without him, a minister of Christ, as with him. Occasionally, of course, there were cases of real need. Some sick person, or some accident or death in a family: then he was a source of genuine help, and those needing him found him a tower of strength.

Those situations, however, were exceptions. The rule was — a large absorption of his time in purely social duties, which, although real, were not of the kind that had drawn him into his profession. What could he do for such persons as Miss Metcalf and Dr. Mixer and scores of others like them? They were lifted above the menaces of the great, fierce needs of life. A fluctuation in stocks might lower Miss Metcalf's income a few dollars per annum, or a business failure or an accident might cost Dr. Mixer a thousand or two dollars, but such people as they were not likely to know fear concerning food or clothing or shelter. Whereas now, all about him — and more and more appealingly, as these plain people grew to know and trust him — the stern realities of human needs came home to his heart. These human beings, many of them, were always dwelling in unrest, like the creatures of the forest, knowing that, at any moment, some event might throw them on the wrong side of that "dead line," which was forever in clear view. And although there was much that was repugnant to him, and much that saddened him, in his surroundings, yet he was positively happy in the glad consciousness that he was actually "ministering," actually "serving" these forlorn victims of their own ignorance and of inexorable social and physical laws.

So the fact that Emmanuel Church, after its long pernicious period of indiscriminate candidating, did finally call the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay — at the salary named by that gentleman, — this made little stir in the life of Lawrence Freeman and his wife. He learned about the decision in this way. He and his wife met one morning, over their coffee and rolls. He had overslept, for he had been the evening before, until a late hour, in a home where a little child had died of diphtheria. There he had given moral and spiritual support, and even manual aid, to the distracted family. All efforts had failed to hold back the pale little sufferer from her journey out into the Unseen; and the most effective service which Lawrence Freeman had rendered was this: he had implanted, deep in the hearts of that agonized mother and father, an unquenchable faith in human kindness and helpfulness. That was a great deal, however, and is, after all, the vital leaven of ethical impulse and Christian power, from which must come the regeneration of the world.

Lawrence sat silently eating his roll and sipping his coffee, when his wife, reading the morning paper, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and then read aloud, "Emmanuel Church has called to its pastorate the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay, D.D., the talented preacher who recently officiated in its pulpit; and it is to be congratulated upon its success in obtaining this brilliant pulpit orator."

Freeman paused, with coffee-cup in air, halfway to his lips. The look of surprise on his face increased, until it surpassed that which was evident on his wife's countenance. Then this expression of amazement was replaced by a look of vast amusement, and he drained the cup, exclaiming, with a laugh, "Here's to his health, and the prosperity of Emmanuel Church!"

Mrs. Freeman saw him fall into a gay mood like this, much oftener now than when he was the harassed minister over his former parish. There was really a large vein of humor in the man, which showed itself in these days, as his wife had not seen it during several years past; and she inwardly gave thanks, many times in a week, for the crisis in Emmanuel Church affairs, which had thrown them into their more natural and very genuine field of work. She now looked at him inquiringly and asked, "Do you know this man?"

"Indeed I do." And then a touch of seriousness came over him. "I am not sure, however, that he will not be just the man for them. Yes, I am inclined to think it may turn out so. But it is queer. It is a capital turn of the wheel of fortune."

Of course there was no other course but to explain to his wife his laughter and his reflections; and while Mrs. Freeman gathered up and washed their few dishes, and put away the remains of their breakfast, Lawrence told her about the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay.

"I knew him," said he, "in the theological seminary, years ago. He took a very brief course there. He had already been in business life, several years, but had come into the ministry in this way. He was, at first, a commercial traveller for a dry-goods house. He was active and shrewd, and a good talker, and, I was told, did very well for his house. Gradually he got into the way of investing in real estate, and there also he made money. In the pursuit of that line of business he became interested in a small wooden church in W——, which was in a bad way, financially, and had been closed for a considerable time. There was some clause in the deed, or will, which would take the church property out of the society's hands and throw it back into the hands of certain heirs, unless a public service, with preaching, were

held in the building, before a particular date. Learning about this, Carnaquay urged that the church be opened and a service held; but the lukewarm remnants of the parish took very little interest in the suggestion, and one member of the committee remarked, 'All very well to say, but who's going to preach? We can't pay enough to make it worth while.' This statement seems to have been taken as if it had been a challenge, by the quick-witted, voluble, young commercial traveller; and he promptly replied that if they would attend to getting a congregation, he would see that the pulpit was filled; and he added, that he could preach, himself, if he wished to. So the news went out that Carnaquay, the shrewd and not over-scrupulous dealer in real estate, would preach, on a certain date, in the long-closed church. And he did so; and, needless to say, he had a large congregation, somewhat to his surprise."

"No need for surprise," remarked Mrs. Freeman, dryly.

"Well, he was surprised, as he afterward admitted; but he never had known what diffidence was, and he did not weaken, under this unusual pressure. He appeared in the pulpit, conducted the service, preached the sermon — and even offered the prayer. As to that last, I have no knowledge; but the gossip of the seminary, regarding the sermon, was that he talked in an easy and interesting way, taking a text, and using a 'first' and 'secondly' and 'thirdly,' and the congregation, which had gathered out of amusement, voted him a 'mighty smart preacher' and wished he would preach again the next Sunday. He did so, and kept on preaching, and got the society reorganized, and made it into a flourishing body."

"It all shows," remarked Mrs. Freeman, in her half-sarcastic, half-indulgent way, "what I have always said,

that a man like you, with sensitiveness and high ideals, was thereby unfitted for the clerical profession, in these mercantile days."

Her husband smiled, and raised a remonstrative forefinger.

"There are churches — and churches," he said. "We must remember that." Then, after a moment, he continued: "Well, Carnaquay had really found the thing he most liked to do; and that was to talk. Nature had made him a talker; this foreordination and predestination of his for talking had been only half fulfilled in his vocation as a drummer, because, you see, he could talk only a part of the time; the man to whom he was selling goods often wanted a little time to say something himself. And Carnaquay must have learned how to hold in, because he did actually sell goods, with great effectiveness. But to stop and let his customer have the floor must have been a cross to him; he really wished to do all the talking. And now, as a preacher, he found a free field, nobody talking back, no questions asked, no person breaking in with suggestions. So he straightway resolved to give up travelling and become an out-and-out preacher, and he did; but he has always held on to some of his investments, and doubtless does so now. As to his studies in divinity, they were very slender. Oh, how many times we fellows used to laugh at him, as he rushed into some lecture and made a great show of taking notes, but really occupied himself — much of the hour — in figuring interest on notes, and in plotting out lots of land which were involved in some new speculation."

Freeman found great amusement in his recollections, and sat silent, for several moments, with a smile on his face. "How long did he study in the seminary?" asked Mrs. Freeman. "And how about that 'D.D'?"

"Oh, those degrees are always easy enough to manage," replied her husband. "His degree of Doctor of Divinity was said to have come from a weak little academy in Iowa, which called itself a college, or even university, and conferred degrees upon almost any preacher, on condition that he pay fifty dollars for the diploma and 'expenses.' Transparent enough the whole scheme! But it is sometimes done by clergymen, and is technically and legally sound."

"Valuable parchment, that!" interjected Mrs. Freeman. "I am glad that you cannot afford it."

"The title is his, however, and he never allows it to slip out of notice. As to his stay in the seminary, it was not longer than six months, at the most. He didn't care for any thorough study of divinity; he simply wished to learn how to use a concordance, and to know which end of a Hebrew Bible to begin at. It was the name of the thing that was his object; to be able to say that he studied at the X—— Seminary, or to refer casually to the time 'when I was in the theological seminary.' Anyhow, he has great talent in popular, sensational speaking, and Emmanuel Church may find him just what it wishes."

"I am a little surprised to hear you say that," Mrs. Freeman remarked, pausing in her work. "I don't believe that a really bad man will be acceptable in that parish; there are too many —"

"Ah, but you have misunderstood me," interrupted her husband, more earnestly. "I see that I haven't given you exactly the impression about Carnaquay that I intended; he is, however, a rather complex type. My dear, he is not a wicked, immoral man, not consciously so; he is simply an active, alert, ambitious, voluble man, without any perceptions whatever of the finer constraints of life, and the higher demands of his

present vocation. He is not *im*moral, as I have always read him, but *un*moral; he would be really astonished to be told that he was dishonest, in any way. He is simply a clever, commercial traveller, turned preacher, and applying the same shrewd arts to his new vocation which he formerly applied to his old one. He is honestly after — not money — but fame, and the personal pleasure of addressing the public; that last is a great joy to him. He really intends to fulfil all the requirements of his new profession; and he does so, so far as he sees them. He is a kind-hearted fellow, when he can be roused from his egotism; a suffering person can appeal confidently to him; but his great aim is, now as formerly, to 'play the game.' He has started to be a successful preacher, and he spares no effort, neglects no helpful accessories, which will advance his plans. But there! I will say no more about him. You must go and see him in the pulpit. I heard him 'perform' twice, several years ago. It is at least interesting, yes, and instructive. Just take him humorously, my dear, that is all. Take him as a spectacle, a bit of comedy!" And Freeman laughingly arose and went over to the bookcase.

"I am looking," said he, after a few moments' search, "for a copy of John Fiske's 'Destiny of Man.' I thought I would send it over to poor Jim Kelsey; that was where I was, last evening. Fiske's book might be the sort that would help him. Oh, here it is!" And he took the book, and stood by the window glancing through the pages.

"Jim had a hard time, I fear, Lawrence," said Mrs. Freeman, with deep concern. "I sometimes wish you didn't take such things quite so heavily on yourself. But — I suppose I love you all the more because you do." And there was a tender look in her proud eyes,

which few except her husband ever saw. "Who is this poor fellow, Kelsey?"

"I met him, first, when the repairs were being done on the chapel. He is a workman in Hargrove's tin-shop. He is an American of Irish descent, and was brought up a Roman Catholic, but he had too much independence of thought to remain content in that dogmatic system, and came out of it. I talked with him several times and found him a sturdy thinker. When his little girl was given up by the doctor, Mrs. Kelsey sent for the priest, and he performed some final ceremony, but Kelsey himself cared nothing about that. I happened to meet him on the street and went home with him; in fact he asked me to."

That was one of many illustrations of the way in which Lawrence Freeman was trustfully welcomed, in the hearts and homes around him. It was commonly said that he "hadn't any style about him, but he had enough heart to make up."

"I had talked with Jim once or twice on serious subjects, and he had expressed himself — rather defiantly, of course, as was natural in talking to a minister, and I didn't mind it — he had expressed himself as being a materialist. Evidently he had read and thought and talked about it, and he was ready to argue to the extreme limit if I would. But I never like to discuss those topics in a combative spirit, as if I were fighting the other man, and I merely dropped a few remarks at such times and turned the talk to other themes. But last night he was in a very different state of mind. Oh, how I pitied him — a great, strong, uncultivated nature. He was glad to have me sit there with them, only a smoky kerosene lamp to light the room, and his little one moaning on her bed. So I talked freely, though quietly, and I am sure that he found some little help in what I said.

I didn't argue the case, but spoke of the way in which I looked at the wonderful thing we call a human life, and what I believed about it. I admitted frankly that the mystery of human personality was indeed a mystery, but I tried to show him how much greater the mystery was if we ruled out God and immortality."

He paused for a moment, with an abstracted and almost rapt look on his earnest, rugged face, as if the scene were very vivid in his memory. Then he continued: "At last the little girl's moaning grew fainter, and presently it ceased altogether. I was aware of the change, and stopped talking; for at such a solemn moment even the kindest and most sympathetic word that man can utter seems too rough and out of place. So we waited in that way several minutes, and then I knelt and prayed, and when I rose, those two, mother and father, were still kneeling. After a little, as we began to talk again, Kelsey took the little thin hand in his big brown one, stroked it a bit, passed his other hand softly over the cold, lifeless forehead, and. said to me as well as he could: 'Mr. Freeman, I understand some things now that I never did before; and one is this, that my little girl is not here. This is where she used to be, but she has somehow gone out of this body. I miss something out of it, and I suppose that what I miss — is — the little girl herself; her real self that used to live here.'

"I was glad to have him able to say that," continued Lawrence. "He is facing the problem of spirit and the Infinite Spirit, on a higher level and more open-mindedly than he used to, and I think that this book of Fiske's may help him."

"Do you suppose," suggested Mrs. Freeman, sympathetically, "that Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' would mean much to him?"

"Perhaps not all of it," replied her husband, "but I believe I will mark a few stanzas and show them to him after he has read this." Saying this, he took his hat and coat to go out.

"I wouldn't go over to Kelsey's again this morning, my dear," said Mrs. Freeman. "You go down town and attend to other matters, and I will do up the book in a paper, and send it over by the grocer's man downstairs. They are always eager to do things for you, and I don't see that you can do anything more for those afflicted people just now. I suppose they will have a priest conduct the funeral service. I hope Kelsey will have the good sense not to squander his slender savings on a showy, wasteful burial."

Freeman reluctantly yielded. He knew that his wife spoke words of reason, and he allowed her to wrap up the book, carried it himself down into the grocery store, over which they lived, and the clerk gladly promised to send it out before noon. Then the busy man went down the street and began his duties for the day.

In a hundred different ways Lawrence Freeman was taking hold of the lives about him. At first he had looked about, seeking opportunities; but now, after these months had passed, opportunities for usefulness came unsought. He had established his regular Sunday services in the chapel; he had given the place no name whatever, but as his own name became known, the people naturally grew to speak of the chapel as "Mr. Freeman's Chapel." And although personally, in his modesty, he would have altered that designation, he saw that he could not easily do so, and he was glad, at least, to keep the place and the service free from all doctrinal and sectarian labels. He had received two or three letters and visits from zealous secretaries and "field agents," each of whom hoped to be allowed to record this new

place of worship on the list of his denomination. But Mr. Freeman was unyielding; he had thought the matter out, and was gladly resolved to go forward without either the aid or the hindrance of other churches and groups of churches.

One incident which, little as he realized it at the time, reached far into the future of his chapel, may properly here be told. He was walking along one of the narrower streets, late in an afternoon, when he saw an old man, across the way, beset by three rough young fellows; they had pushed up against him, and were hustling him about, in a rowdyish fashion. A basket, which the old man had been carrying, had fallen from his hand and rolled in the gutter, with the meat and vegetables it had contained. His spectacles also had been knocked off; and as he stood there, the helpless butt of this horse-play, the minister caught sight of him.

Freeman, as a boy, had been considered quite up to the average standards of boyish activity; and, as I have pointed out, when a collegian, he had been found, on several occasions, to have a rather "nasty" temper. And in the gymnasium classes he was known to possess a pair of clever fists; but, on going into the ministry, he had struggled with his hasty and violent nature and had subdued it; at least, nobody in Emmanuel Church had ever thought of him as having much difficulty in controlling his feelings, and most of the parish did not credit him with the possession of any strong emotions whatever. That had been the result of his firm hold upon himself; he had set out to be a clergyman, and he had disciplined himself in practice, as in theory he had urged such self-discipline from the pulpit. Moreover, no occasion had happened to arise, for a long time, which caught him as unawares as did this one. Now he rapidly crossed the street, with a tide of indignation

swelling within him, such as he had not felt for years. The sight of the poor, helpless old man, surrounded and baited by those young ruffians, swept him from his anchorage of self-control before he knew it. He knew only one thing, that such conduct was brutal and hateful; and with a few, swift strides he came up to them, caught one by the neck and flung him into the road, gave another a push which sent him spinning with a crash against a brick wall, and before the third one, the leader, could set up any effective line of defence, the indignant and angered clergyman put his fist up to his face, and, hoarse with anger, exclaimed, "You scoundrels, I'll teach you to maltreat an old man!" His face was flaming red, the old tell-tale scar on his temple was fairly livid, and his flashing eyes, his fury of indignant contempt, utterly disconcerted and cowed the three young ruffians, although they were larger than himself, and not inexperienced in street rows. They were clearly frightened — for the moment, at least; and they began to shrink away. Then a strange reaction took place in the aroused and wrathful minister. Those street hoodlums had probably never seen its similar before. Had they fought him, his violent wrath and tension of nerves would have held up until physical collapse came; but now, when they retreated, confusedly, before his sudden attack, his anger and fierceness went from him in an instant; and the young fellows must have been surprised — indeed they were surprised, as they afterward said, never more so in their lives — when he suddenly lowered his fist, the fierce fire left his eyes, and in a low, firm, kindly voice, he said: "Now, boys, it wasn't just fair, was it, to treat an old, white-haired man that way? Say, now, it wasn't just square, was it? I know you didn't mean any harm. Let's shake hands, now! Let's shake hands!" And with a sincerity which they

could not doubt, and a kindness and heartiness which amazed and puzzled and yet fascinated them, he went up to one and another, and actually shook hands; then, with a knowledge of the rough life of the quarter, and with an adaptability which he had not possessed six months before, he said, in the simplest and friendliest way imaginable: "Now, boys, I'm the minister of that chapel in the next street; and I wish you would come over and see me, and help me run it, too. I need your help, for some things." Then he said "good-by," and set out after the old man, who had picked up his belongings and was hurrying away as fast as his decrepit legs would carry him.

Freeman did not follow him into the cross-alley, which he suddenly entered, but continued more slowly along the street, whither his business led him. The minister was considerably shaken up by the whole affair; he had been terribly aroused, so far as the emotion of anger was concerned, and now, when the scene was over, he suffered not a little regret and self-mortification. He had not so lost his grasp on his temper for years; and he hardly knew himself, in this rare, ungoverned mood. Yet he was convinced that only his towering rage — which must have been very evident — only this could have intimidated those three young ruffians. Any less bold and determined interference on his part very likely would have resulted in failure, and even in injury to himself. So he took a brisk walk out into the suburbs, and tried to calm down.

That was by no means the end of the affair, especially with reference to the poor, decrepit old man. The chain of causation ran like this: A week or two afterward, as Mr. and Mrs. Freeman were sitting in the evening at the table, reading, somebody came stumbling up the narrow stairway, and, after a pause, there was a knock

on the door. Lawrence went to the door and opened it. A man, in rough garb, stood there with hat in hand, and with a worn and anxious expression on his face. He was a German, as his speech showed when he asked if Mr. Freeman was the minister, and then went on to state his errand. With considerable hesitation and manifest distress, he finally communicated the information that his wife had killed herself, the day before, and that he had not been able to find a priest or minister who would hold a service of Christian burial over her dead body.

Freeman at once set the harassed man's mind at rest. "I will hold a service," he said promptly. And the German almost cried with relief and joy; and then explained that his wife had been sick for a long time, and had been "queer," and he thought she was not responsible, and so on. When Freeman, led by curiosity, happened to ask the man how he chanced to come to him, the man showed some confusion, hesitated, and finally said, blurting it out impulsively: "Vell, I dell you. I go to Ben Birch; 'Ole Unkel Ben,' volks call him. He mein freund, long time. You drove off de bad men what hustled him. Understand?" And Lawrence recognized the reference to the old man whom he had defended from the three roughs.

"Vell, ver goot! I go to 'Ole Unkel Ben,' und I say, 'Gott in Himmel, vot do I now? Who vill mein poor weib decent bury? Und Unkel Ben, he say, 'Go to Meester Vreeman! He's der man. He'll fix everyding all right for you.' So I gome."

With that outburst, given from an overstrained and now grateful heart, the worthy German began to move toward the door; then, with some difficulty, he made known the time and place of the funeral service, stammered profuse thanks, and soon was gone, his great

heavy boots pounding down over the dark, narrow stairway.

It need not be added that Freeman fully and tenderly carried out the promise he had made; and the poor victim of her own hand was given respectable Christian burial, being doubtless worthier of it than many whose elegies have been uttered by eloquent lips, and whose dust reposes in costly mausoleums.

The "thread of causation," which has been mentioned, ran through this incident, back to "Uncle Ben Birch" himself. And Freeman had some curiosity to meet and converse with this quaint old man, whom he had so violently rescued (he reddened whenever he recalled it), who evidently had so flattering an estimate of his rescuer. But duties were so pressing at this time that several weeks elapsed before Freeman could follow up the interesting thread of suggestion, which I have indicated, regarding Uncle Ben. However, in due time, the opportunity came and the visit was made.

Lawrence found the old man in the roughly finished loft of a carpenter's shop, not far away, and, passing up a rickety stairway, on the outside of the shop, he knocked and was admitted.

"Uncle Ben" proved to be one of those "characters" who may be found in every city and town, if one has an eye for them. He was a large man, over seventy years old, still florid in complexion, with thin, straggling white hair on his head, and a fringe of white hair running around under his chin, in the fashion made so famous by Horace Greeley years before. It was from the great journalist himself that Uncle Ben had copied the fashion; and one of the reminiscences which he liked best to give was the one wherein he himself had figured, blacking the boots of the famous Horace, and adopting him then and there as the ideal of his simple heart. Uncle Ben was very

slow, "moderate," as people sometimes remarked good-naturedly; and as to tidiness of personal appearance, that was never suggested by his attire. He had never, even in his palmiest days, been more than a faithful chore-man, and always had accepted gifts of garments in lieu of cash. He wore congress boots, when he could get them, for they required but little time to put on; the fact that his trousers legs generally rested on the little straps, at the top of the boots behind, did not concern him — certainly he could plead that he never saw them thus propped up. Uncle Ben was possessed of a very kind heart, of the phlegmatic sort, and had long shared his food and shelter with three or four cats, who accepted his devotion and his bounty with feline dignity. He earned such money as he could by simple repairs on furniture, having a bench and some tools in one corner of the loft. When business of this sort was light, he gave his attention to the braiding of rugs from strips of rags; and these rags were gathered by him on sundry rounds which he made to the houses of a half dozen old families, whom he had known for thirty or forty years. He was proud of his handiwork, as a craftsman in rug-making; especially was he pleased with his original designs. One saying of his — uttered at a time when his supply of rags had fallen short — was quoted to all newcomers in the neighborhood: "Folks don't know what things I've got in my head if I only had the rags." So, like many another aspiring mortal, the artistic yearnings of his soul were repressed by his material limitations. It was always amusing to note, in Uncle Ben, as you often can note it in an "old resident," an utter indifference and ignorance regarding the new life growing up around him. To him the North Side was still the North Side, of thirty years before; and the only people who had real existence for him were the half dozen old families

of aged men and women, who formerly had been active in developing that region, but now were quietly retired into nooks of observation and corners of comment. When Uncle Ben said, "Folks is feelin' bad 'baout the new railroad," he meant old Sam Littlefield and infirm Jonas Marsh, tottering white-haired men, who crept along, unnoticed, from eddy to eddy, in the swift currents of the busy streets; and when Uncle Ben said, "Everybody is a takin' on 'baout that 'ar burglar case over to Ridgely," he meant that the Misses Taft (aged spinsters in bombazine) and possibly old Mrs. Snow (the rich widow of his former employer) were laboring under some agitation of spirit. To Uncle Ben a half dozen of these households comprised "the taown"; all other people were interlopers, who had somehow secured the legal right to invade the locality, but who really did not belong there and must be tolerated.

One of the attractive elements in Uncle Ben's character was a childish simplicity of manner and frankness of speech, which was the same to all comers. This unspoiled quality in the old man sometimes was drawn upon by persons of his acquaintance, for the purpose of raising a laugh; but the laugh often recoiled on the head of him who had raised it, as the old man, who had absolutely no sense of humor, replied with some frank personality. Nobody had ever known him to do a dishonest deed or speak an untruth; no, he did not color or shade the harsh fact which happened to be in his mind, but spoke it to friend or foe, yet in such a calm, reflective way, that nobody could be very angry with him. The passion of anger, like that of humor, seemed to be left out of his make-up; sometimes mild interest and anxiety were manifest in his voice or manner, but these never resolved themselves into any severer emotion.

When Freeman made his way into the restricted apartment where the old man dwelt with his numerous pets, Uncle Ben was sitting on the edge of his couch, trouserless, because that garment was in his hands, undergoing repairs. He showed not the slightest constraint or shyness at being thus discovered, but paused in his sewing and waited for his visitor to speak. The old man always kept his mouth slightly open, which set him in a chronic appearance of inquiry toward the world; this, indeed, was also much his mental attitude. The world had buffeted him often, but had also interested and puzzled him; and, of the two, mild perplexity and curiosity had triumphed over despondence or any spirit of retaliation. Therefore, having preserved through life a calmness and gentleness of spirit, the old man's large face was smooth and fair, his pale blue eyes opened with the expectancy of childhood, and his open mouth was symbolic of the receptivity and hospitality of his mind.

"Are you Mr. Birch?" asked the minister, cheerily, closing the door behind him, and stepping over a slumbering cat.

The old man, always slow of speech and movement, stared at him a moment, pushed back his heavy-rimmed spectacles, and said, "Yes, I'm — I'm Uncle Ben." Then, as he saw more clearly, in the somewhat dim light of the loft, he recognized his visitor, and his hesitating manner changed to assured pleasure. "Wall now! Ef 'tain't kind in yer, Mr. Freeman, ter come and see me!" And, without any apology for his appearance, he walked, bare-legged, across the floor, trousers in hand, and greeted his caller.

Lawrence had brought two pounds of mutton-chops with him, and these he at once presented, saying, "My wife sent these along, Uncle Ben; and she hopes

you will not give too large a part of them to your cats."

This was said with a quizzical smile, which Mr. Freeman intended as a clew to their facetiousness of meaning; but Uncle Ben, always serious and prosaic, weighed the matter in his mind, staring absently with his dull, pale blue eyes at his visitor, and presently rejoined, as if giving a Supreme Court decision: "Wall, I'll tell yer; I'll jest divide up the fat, on — on that one (looking at them critically), and parcel it out tew 'em. Yer see, I hev ter feed 'em seprit, or thet thar yaller one, ez looks so meechin', would git the hull on't. He's a tussler, I tell yer!" And the old man's face showed signs of pride and responsibility.

"All right, all right!" assented the minister, cheerfully; and then, to divert the current of conversation from this somewhat unfruitful topic, he spoke a few words in praise of the convenient housekeeping arrangements which were visible around the loft. From that he turned to the subject of rag carpets; and Uncle Ben, now resuming his sartorial occupation, explained the cares and rewards of the rag carpet industry, and enlarged upon the infinite superiority of such products over flimsy "store stuff." From speaking about rugs and carpets, the old man easily passed to the subject of boots — boots in general; then to the more special topic of "boots which he had blacked"; and then the story of his blacking Horace Greeley's boots was inevitable, and was slowly and fully laid before his visitor.

"He tole me thet he'd git me a position," concluded Uncle Ben, reflectively, with no bitterness, or even regret, audible in his voice, as he tried to thread the needle by the dim light of the dusty window. "Yes, that's wot he said; an' I didn't ask for it, nuther.

But . . ."

Here his poor, clumsy fingers lost their insecure grasp on the needle, and it fell to the floor. With not the slightest sign of irritation the stiff old man began slow and systematic search for the bit of steel, still keeping up his narration, with sundry pauses for breath.

"But I reckin — he hed considerable — on his mind. Them ez knowed — said he did; and he never — never done nothin' abaout it."

"That was too bad," remarked his visitor, sympathetically, himself looking for the needle.

"Wall, I dunno ez 'tis," continued Uncle Ben, in the gasping intervals of his search. "I might 'a' got — inter some wickedness or other — ef I'd 'a' gone to that gret city — er New York. There's allus somebody — a stealin', or burnin', or murd'rin' — in thet 'ar place." And he stood up, at last, with the recreant bit of steel between his thumb and finger. Somehow he didn't quite look the depraved criminal, as he stood there, with his simple, sincere, guileless face fairly purple by reason of his exertions. But Mr. Freeman nodded, in affirmation of the remote possibility, and waited for his host to continue.

"Yer see," said Uncle Ben, attacking the needle with some thread, "I cal'late ez I've done purty well, ez 'tiz; an' there's no tellin' haow I'd 'a' got on in New York. So I never laid it up agin Mr. Greeley, thet he didn't git me a place. I've hed my share of the good things o' life, I reckin." And the solemn way in which this assertion came from the decrepit, impoverished old man made Lawrence Freeman feel moist about the eyes, though whether from pity or mirth he could not quite say.

The invincible good nature, the undiluted optimism of the aged creature was marvellous. Mr. Freeman could not resist the temptation to test him further. "You

must have had disappointments, though," he ventured.

A short pause, while Uncle Ben thought the suggestion over, candidly. "Yaas, I can't quite say but I hev, naow an' then. But they mos' giner'lly turned out blessin's in disguise." Another pause, and he went on struggling patiently with his mending. "I mus' say I was kinder disapp'inted, for a time, 'baout that will er Mis' Snow's. You know Mis' Snow, of course; everybody knows her."

Mrs. Snow was the rich widow of a former employer of Uncle Ben's, previously mentioned.

"Waal, Mis' Snow 'n' I hev ben friends a long time. I wuz with her when her husband died. An' abaout thet time she got kinder riled at her relations, an' she says ter me, one day after readin' a letter, 'Ben,' she says, 'I'll leave my money ter you, I will. See 'f I don't.' Waal, thet didn't stir me up very much, but I didn't object ter hevin' a leetle more o' this world's goods, ef she wuz so inclined."

Here he broke his thread and his discourse, for a brief period, then continued, in as calm and impartial a tone as if discussing his cats or rugs: "But, yer see, she keeps right on a-livin', an' a-livin', an' ez likely's not I'll git through fust. 'Twont matter much, either way; only sometimes, when I git kinder short er rags, I thinks to myself, thinks I, Naow haow nice 'twould be ter be able ter buy a hull lot o' purty rags all ter onct!"

Mr. Freeman could hardly credit his ears; but, as he listened, there could be no real doubt of the queer old man's entire childlike sincerity. There was a mild desire evident in him to possess a little more money, and a frank surprise and almost gentle regret that "Mis'" Snow did not "git through" as soon as could naturally be expected; but no bitterness, no envy, at all.

The mending being accomplished, in sadly ineffective fashion, Uncle Ben drew on his trousers and set about showing to his visitor his various possessions, meanwhile talking in his slow, precise, methodical way. "I haven't forgot 'baout the way you beat off them rascals thet day," he said. "An' I was thinkin' could I do anythin' fur you. I hear ez you're a-doin' a master sight er good round here, an' I wish I could help yer. I use' ter sing purty well, onct; so they use ter tell me; ef I felt a little stronger, I'd come over an' help yer along o' thet 'ar chapel work er yourn. I use' ter —"

Then a good idea struck him, and he stopped short in his movements, his poor old brain — like a feeble engine — being unable to furnish force enough to sustain more than one kind of activity at a time. "I'll tell yer. I'll bring my fiddle over an' play, ter help along the singin'. How's thet?"

Mr. Freeman was a trifle discomposed at the suggestion, but hoped he did not show any confusion, in voice or manner. "I thank you very much, Uncle Ben," he said. "I shall be glad to have your help with the music, in one way or another, at the chapel." Then he turned the conversation into a new channel, and had a hope that this sudden resolution of the old man's would be forgotten. But he was mistaken. He did not yet fully grasp Uncle Ben's faithful, plodding, primitive nature.

After a short stay, the minister said that he must go; and, taking up his hat, he moved slowly and circumspectly toward the door. There he shook hands with his host, and was about to leave; but Uncle Ben held him, several moments, firmly and affectionately by the hand, and looked him squarely and honestly in the face. "I'm gretly pleased ter hev seen yer," he said;

"I've heered tell abaout yer, an' I've heered many good things said abaout yer. An' I reckin they're true. I like yer much, Mr. Freeman; an' I'll come over, some day, an' help yer with the fiddle, abaout that 'ar music."

CHAPTER X

FREEMAN'S CHAPEL

"Give me the power to labor for mankind;
Make me the mouth of such as cannot speak,
Eyes let me be to groping men and blind,
A conscience to the base and to the weak."

— THEODORE PARKER.

REGARDING the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay, Freeman, as yet, had done nothing. He had decided — urgently seconded by his wife — to wait for Carnaquay to come, if he wished, and seek him out, not wishing to appear in any way to intrude upon his successor. That Carnaquay would come and find him, in due time, he felt sure; because their relations had always been friendly, though not intimate. Mr. Freeman, however, did not remain ignorant of the many novel events which were transpiring, under the new régime, in Emmanuel Church. The newspapers gave full reports, from time to time, of sociables and services, some of them decidedly unique in character, but all of them attended, as the reports said, "by large and interested assemblies."

Then, too, Mrs. Guthrie was a not infrequent visitor, and a welcome one, in the cosey and tasteful apartment over the grocer's shop. "Nice enough, after you get up here," sniffed that rosy, nimble-tongued young person. "Only you will both die of heart disease, from climbing that awfully long stairway. Ah, what a charming shade of red that wall-paper is! And that delicate dark bor-

der at the top! Just like black lace draped down over it! Charming!" And Mrs. Guthrie put up a tortoise-shell lorgnette, to examine the wall.

"I'm glad you admire it," remarked Mrs. Freeman, indifferently; then she added, with a laugh, "But I'm more glad that Mrs. Cameron, above us, admires it. She has ordered a paper like it; it doesn't cost much. She is to give up her tea, and Mr. Cameron is to give up his tobacco, until they have paid for it."

"Not half bad, that!" responded Mrs. Guthrie, and laid aside her hat. When asked about the new minister, she poised her head on one side and tersely described him as vulgar and conceited. "And, O ye shades of Robertson and Maurice!" (the deceased Dr. Guthrie's contemporaries and personal friends), "you ought to see that tall, swarthy mountebank stride up and down the platform; he gets across in five strides. I've counted them, often; and the way he throws the books around!"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Freeman, in some surprise.

"Haven't you heard about that?" returned Mrs. Guthrie, laughing merrily. "Why, you ought to see that performance. He is tremendous, overwhelming, as a scholar, you know; at least that is his rôle — one of them. I am a bit accustomed to real scholarship, you remember. Dr. Guthrie had something of a name in Assyriology, more so abroad than in this country; and he knew how to use books — so does this man, for that matter," and she laughed afresh. "He knows how to use them for his own clever purposes; and he brings in several volumes, every Sunday, to refer to and to quote. Doesn't need to at all. He can reel off yards of stuff whenever he wishes to. But you see, the books — especially big ones, bound in sheep and leather — give

plain evidence of his vast scholarship; and he reads them off with a flourish, then often tosses them away on the floor, a dozen paces away, and 'bang' they go, and everybody's nerves are kept in tension, and nobody is in danger of falling asleep. It is a great piece of — well, — bluff; that is the truth. Still," she added scornfully, "it seems to impress those ignoramuses wonderfully."

"Have you met Dr. Carnaquay, yet?" asked Lawrence, casually laying aside the book he had been reading.

"No, I have not. I haven't cared to. They say he is rather agreeable, in private. But everybody runs after him so madly that I keep out of the way. There is Miss Metcalf, now. Calls herself his cousin. A good many removes, as I happen to know. And she has him at her house half the time. Feeds him, I suppose. That is the way to reach men's regard and esteem, even if they are clergymen." And she tossed her round curly head and nodded mischievously at Mr. Freeman. "However, he rides along on the top of the wave at present. How long his glory will wear, nobody can say."

"I hope it will last," said Mr. Freeman, with sincerity and earnestness. "And quite likely it will. The man has talent, and means to do what seems to him right. I wouldn't be surprised if he proved to be just the man for the place. I can say that honestly, for I am happier in my work over here, than ever before, since I entered the ministry. You must come down to one of our services." And he added playfully, "I can't let you teach in our Sunday-school. You say such — such — *unexpected* things; there! May I put it that way?"

"Any way you like. But I'll come, some day, soon. Don't be surprised if you see me come in, with a big gag in my mouth. You'll feel safer, then."

Thus the vivacious young creature chattered on. It was evident that she took very little interest in the new occupant of Emmanuel pulpit. On the other hand, she was greatly interested in the affairs of her two friends. From her point of view the kind of life that they were living was rather Quixotic, as she sometimes casually remarked, when they were mentioned by anybody; but, underneath this light comment, she really knew that they were accomplishing such good as can be accomplished, by human beings of higher tastes and intelligence, for others lower in the scale, through personal contact; and this work, although less conspicuous and impressive than making reform speeches and establishing reform associations, is, after all, the permanent sort of work which the world needs.

She gave the Freemans more pity than they needed, as they sometimes laughingly told her. She saw only the outside of their situation, with noise and untidiness very apparent; she did not see the interesting, picturesque, and pathetic inside of it all.

The chapel was steadily gaining in popular favor. Mr. Freeman had not come into his work with fully developed theories as to its every part. He was clear about having a Sunday service, one at least, and later possibly two; this first one had been begun at the outset, and was conducted wholly by Mr. Freeman, in the most orderly and reverent way possible. At first a large number of people came, from curiosity, and attributed all kinds of motives to the vigorous, earnest man in the low reading-desk. Then this crowd drifted away, its curiosity being satisfied, and the real beginning of a permanent congregation was made. A score in all, perhaps, for several Sundays; then a few more, and a steady, though slow growth.

The truth was — and Lawrence Freeman soon real-

ized it — that he preached to these people with an apostolic simplicity and earnestness which he had never before known. Formerly, until he came to the chapel, he had carefully prepared and read manuscript sermons. Now, he simply talked with directness and freedom. In Emmanuel Church he was always conscious that watchful eyes were on him, and critical ears were following every word; and a slight awkwardness in gesture, or a slight slip in pronunciation would be noted, and might shut out all the good effect of the sermon. But here, among these people, who sadly mutilated the king's English, and had not on an average five dollars ahead in the world, such matters as accent, and angle of gesture, and inflection of tone seemed trifling indeed; and he was deeply moved — not to "preach," as a pulpit effort, but to tell them what would help them to bear their trials, and not become discouraged, and would lead them to greater faith in the boon of life which had been granted them, shadowed and defiled as that life too often was. So he spoke with real power, and the people came in, some of them slinking into rear seats, in readiness for easy retreat if they were bored; and gradually there had come to a consciousness of itself a veritable permanent congregation. This and the Sunday-school were the first two oases in this desert of the North Side; and Lawrence gave himself to their strengthening and expansion, with joyous zeal.

As for Uncle Ben Birch, he was as good as his word; and presented himself, one Sunday morning, at the chapel, with his violin wrapped up in a piece of brown paper, tied with a cord large enough to hang an undersized murderer. Lawrence was a little anxious, as he discerned the solemn, red, rotund visage of the old man at the door. He did not dare to endanger the order and seriousness of his morning service, by allowing

Uncle Ben to take part in it. How good or ill the violin playing would be he had no idea. Still, he would not, for the world, have hurt the kind old creature's feelings, if it possibly could be avoided; and, as he walked down the aisle to meet him, he resolved to suggest that the violin help be given to the Sunday-school, which would come directly after the regular service.

This transfer of auxiliary force was successfully accomplished; and Uncle Ben sat through the service, violin beside him, and seemed much edified. Lawrence, who was himself musical, could hear the old man sing, during the hymns, and, although his voice was cracked and thin, he certainly sang on the key. Mrs. Freeman, who played the small cabinet organ, which alone sustained the singing, was much relieved to note this evidence of musical ear in the would-be violin accompanist. So, when the Sunday-school hour arrived, both the minister and his wife called upon Uncle Ben, with confidence, to lend his aid; and he proved to be a passably good player, keeping perfect time, though sometimes ending up one of the more rapid tunes, a note or so behind the organ and school.

From that time on, Uncle Ben became one of the most regular helpers at the chapel. He was ready to do any kind of work that was needed. Here was opened up to him a new field for his work and his interest. Lawrence was assured that the old man sounded the praises — and the *needs* of the chapel, as well — among his group of aged friends, when one day there was brought to the chapel a large and excellent electric stereopticon. With it came a note from old Mrs. Snow; and the wavering, wandering lines of chirography informed Mr. Freeman of her great interest in his work, and begged him to accept the stereopticon, adding that if he would direct the arranging of connecting wires to

bring in the electricity from the street wire, she would settle for this work. Also she added that she would pay for twenty-five dollars' worth of slides for the lantern, if he would select such as he desired.

This unexpected gift was easily traceable to Uncle Ben's earnestness and activity. When directly charged with the responsibility of the extremely welcome apparatus, the old man made no response to the humorous vein in which Mr. Freeman spoke. He had, seemingly, no sense of humor, whatever; but he answered, with candid deliberation: "Wall, yer see, I'd heern yer say, a number er times, thet yer wished yer hed one er them things fer yer lectures, an' so I jest tole Mis' Snow thet I reckoned she'd better git yer one. I says to her, says I, 'Now, Mis' Snow, yer can afford it, an' he's a raal good man, an' he's a-doin' of a fust-rate work.' An' she said she'd see 'baout it. An' I said ter her, jest afore I come away, I says, 'Naow, don't you forgit that marter, Mis' Snow, will yer?' And she didn't."

It was like finding one's self in some other world than this complex and selfish one, to hear Uncle Ben narrate that interview. Mr. Freeman was vastly amused, as well as deeply grateful, at the picture of this impoverished old man coolly advising and ingenuously urging the rich old widow to give away some of her money. Evidently the two old white heads had understood each other perfectly. There was great confidence on both sides, — that confidence which *can* come with many years of friendship, but does not always; the old dame taking the advice concerning her purse, in exactly the way it was offered, and Uncle Ben reasonably sure that "Mis'" Snow needed only to be told by him of a good opportunity to give away a hundred or two dollars, and she would straightway respond.

So the stereopticon was duly installed in the chapel,

and was very serviceable in lectures and talks — not only on science and history and art, but even with subjects of an industrial and sociological character. Mr. Freeman had some inward debate, at first, as to whether he would give these lectures and talks in the one large room or auditorium of the chapel. There were several small rooms, below stairs, and at the back; but the chapel hall itself was the only large space available. The minister had certain ritualistic or ceremonial fibres in his nature, which made him shrink, somewhat, from using one and the same room for both secular instruction and divine worship; but he felt that he had no choice in the matter — the one large hall was his only available space. He was too delicately devout to say, as do some, that all God's truth — whether in science or poetry — is divine, and therefore one kind should be as sacredly treated as another. Mr. Freeman's own fine instincts told him that, although in some moments of chemical research or anthropological inquiry, a student might be lifted into a worshipful frame of mind, yet, during the larger portion of the time, the student's mind is on a level distinctly less fervent and spiritual than the level of worship and communion with God. Therefore, while the minister welcomed truth, as a message of God, in whatever field of inquiry it was attained, yet he was guided by his own experience and his own laws of soul impression, and knew that pure, heartfelt worship was higher than the most earnest intellectual search for facts.

Accordingly, it was with a degree of reluctance that he gave up his finer preference, and used the chapel for purposes of instruction as well as worship. As a rule, the meetings, both those for worship and those for talks and discussions, were orderly. Lawrence was greatly pleased when he found, among the men who

came to the chapel, one or two who would act as presiding officer, at the debates on theological and ethical and economic themes. The minister rejoiced to see that the men — all of them hard workers — had grown, in a sense of order and self-control, enough to manage their own meeting; and he preferred sitting off at one side, and taking part, exactly like the others, in arguing or elucidating some point of morals or government or theology. It was really from these free open meetings that he drew many of his suggestions about sermons; he saw the prejudices and irrationalities of these men's thought, and the aims and ambitions of their hearts, so clearly, that he was constrained to preach to them lovingly, on the higher interpretation of their own daily lives. A text, which he had once seen on the front of a pulpit in an Italian Protestant church at Bologna, had strongly appealed to him; and he had himself painted it on the front panel of his own little pulpit. "*Veritas in Carita*" was now publicly his standard, as a preacher; and he was surprised, many times over, to see what severely admonitory forms of address these people would receive, — both in the mass and as individuals, — so long as a really disinterested good-will and affection went with the words. Yet how easy for the preacher to mistake a peevish, fretful, fault-finding mood, in himself, for one of disinterested pastoral counsel! Several times Mr. Freeman fell into this error, and was warned against it by the expression of some antagonism in a face before him, or some tone in the voice of the man or woman whom he was advising. But loving sympathy, warm and self-forgetful and ready to sacrifice for the person counselled — this would carry words of plainest and most unwelcome advice.

With regard to the formal organization of the people

into some kind of society or church, Freeman waited half a year before seeing his path plainly. He was aware that there was no pressing need of taking this step of organizing, and he much preferred to wait until the people knew and trusted him. When the time did come for forming some organization, Freeman followed, as closely as possible, the simplicity of the early church. The extraordinary divergences that had come about, in the modern Christian churches, from the simple group life of the churches founded at Jerusalem and Corinth and Ephesus — these always had troubled him.

In those early days of the new religion, men and women who enrolled themselves in one group, as believers, as followers of Christ, were largely of similar education and taste and even of wealth. Therefore they were congenial, one with another; they were of one great family; they thought in similar ways, and felt in similar ways, and knew and could minister to one another's needs. In short they were — as we would express it to-day — on one social and mental plane; and intercourse among them was natural and easy. But to-day the churches comprise very diverse kinds of tastes and temperaments and degrees of education. Diversity in the possession of wealth is not an intrinsic vital difference which should separate men; but taste and manners and education are. And Mr. Freeman saw that the hypocrisy and absurdity, which honeycombed many of the so-called Christian churches, lay chiefly in this: that they were made up of persons who, theoretically, were brethren and in close sympathy, but were really diverse and out of touch with one another, in real and unavoidable ways, quite as much as in artificial and wilfully selfish ways.

In times of great emotion, in crises of fear or pain or joy, individuals who are very diverse can temporarily

unite, as at the time of an accident, or in a public rejoicing over a military victory, or at a death-bed; but these unusual unions of diverse natures are necessarily brief, and cease when the strong emotion which held them dies out. One great altruistic emotion, like that of Christ's for human beings, can break down these separating walls of division; but so great a force, so full a measure of the "passion of humanity," is not to be expected of most people; and it exists in but few churches which have attained any considerable age. With the beginners of a sect, and under the zeal of founding the society, a brief period of entire corporate sympathy may be expected; but it soon dies out, as divergences in taste and education creep in.

Freeman was influenced, considerably, in the form which he gave his organization, by the excellent order known as "Odd Fellows." And the members of the "Freeman Chapel League" took pledges upon themselves to maintain public worship and to minister to one another's needs; and they took this pledge each new year, and paid quarterly fees of two dollars. Since Mr. Marshall and his friend bore the expenses of the chapel itself, and Mr. and Mrs. Freeman supported themselves by teaching and writing and on Mrs. Freeman's little income, this money paid in made up a fund which was drawn upon by sick members. Thus the society took on the manly character of a mutually helpful order, and yet gave opportunity for the cultivation of the religious aspirations as well.

Interesting as was this part of Lawrence's work, he had had enough experience with people, young and old, to know that for really appreciable growth in character — moral and religious — the work among boys and girls, under fifteen or sixteen years of age, was far more important than that among their elders. Such work is

often deemed less dignified, and is less highly honored than many "reforms" among grown-up people, which absorb much time and money, give rise to many public meetings, and never really reform anybody. Any candid person, who has carefully studied reform-work, among grown-up people, and compared it with a true educational work among children, cannot fail to see how vastly more productive is the work among the children; surprising changes for the better can be noticed among the latter, in habits and speech and points of view, in a very short time. Of course, the wisest method of reforming and regenerating the world — at least the so-called civilized world — would be to go straight down to the physiological basis, and apply, first of all, most of the rules and restrictions to the human species, which cattle-breeders already apply to lower species. Such methods, evolved from medical science, would solve fundamentally many of the problems of vice and disease, with which human energy now hopelessly wrestles, and for which it pours out torrents of gold.

But such fundamental reforms are impossible at present; people in general are too irrational, and too closely wedded to old Hebraistic ideals, and time-honoured customs, and morbid sentiments. Failing this radical method, therefore, the method which comes nearest to it must serve the world's purpose; and that is none other than to take each new generation, at as early a period as possible, and remake it, — fighting heredity, and beating off and out-witting environment, — while the young natures are still "in the green fibre," as is said of plants and twigs.

Looking at these matters in this way, Lawrence Freeman believed that while, in his work, certain results among the older people might make a showing in chapel attendance or savings-bank accounts or improved

homes, yet the really permanent good, in largest measure to the world, was to come out in the later lives of the children whom he could awaken to higher aims, and arouse to purer and nobler conduct. Therefore, he gave much thought to the children and young people, and counted his time and strength well expended, when used in their service. He believed that it was not enough to gather those dirty, rough, noisy, profane children in large groups in some hall; that was but a small part of what he aimed to do. He had found, by previous experience, that children, like grown people, when gathered in a mass, remain intrenched in their accustomed habits of thought and will; but if separated into small groups of five, or three, or — best of all — two, and put under the wholesome influence of an older, wiser, more loving nature — that is the situation which carries the greatest possibilities of reform, of regeneration; that union of two kinds of atoms — weak evil with strong good, feeble depravity with earnest virtue, vacillating downward purpose with fixed upward will — that union of those two sociological atoms forms the molecule of potential reform for all social ills and diseases.

Therefore, Lawrence had arranged a half dozen small rooms, well lighted, back of the chapel hall and below it; and here were gathered, on certain appointed evenings in the week, little groups — two, three, or perhaps four in number — of boys or girls around a table and a leader. These leaders were himself, his wife, Mrs. Guthrie, Ned and Olive Marshall, and several more persons, a part from Emmanuel Church and a part from the North Side itself. The minister actually refused one or two zealous applicants for enrolment in the work, because he believed they were not fitted to properly impress the young people, whom they sought to instruct and influence. Thus there were never to be seen such

riotous demonstrations, in and near "Freeman's Chapel," as often are seen in or near many "boys' clubs,"—mob-like demonstrations, which serve only to deepen the lawless instincts in those boys' hearts, and to make ineffective all appeals to the finer feelings, which might be successfully made, if the lads were taken separately or in very small groups.

Lawrence Freeman had a real faculty for getting on with children. This faculty is not, as many people falsely fancy, a faculty based on goodness and earnestness of disposition, and on the child's perception of this; it may exist in natures that are selfish and deceitful and brutish. It is largely a matter of sympathy and the absence of self-consciousness; and Freeman, who had been shy and even self-distrustful in the pulpit, before adult people, here, among children, was singularly free and confident. So he knew scores of boys and girls, and had their respect and confidence. The self-control which he had gained stood him in good stead also. There is no quality which more commands the respect of young people, themselves prone to yield to passing emotions, than firm self-control. The older person, who carries himself calmly and equably through a scene of passion, wins high praise from his juniors. He may have few strong and noble emotions, and older people, perceiving this, may shun or hate him; but, for youth's approval, equanimity is one of the highest qualities, and when wedded to intelligent sympathy, can lead the children as persuasively as did the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

When Freeman went along the street, he frequently was greeted, frankly and confidently, by one and another boy or girl; and this naïve testimony to his natural and friendly relations with them was much enjoyed by him. One evening, as he was approaching the neighborhood where he lived, he passed a small lad

who had tears in his eyes, and an expression of anxiety on his face. So soon as the boy recognized the minister, he ran up to him and burst out impulsively, "Oh, Mr. Freeman, can't you go and stop daddy? Can't you stop him?"

"Why, my child, what is the matter? What do you mean?" asked Lawrence, stopping and putting his hand affectionately on the child's head.

The boy had burst out afresh into weeping, so soon as he had spoken, evidently transferring his burden of anxiety to his trusted older friend. But now, realizing that he had not made clear what his trouble was, he curbed his grief and sobbed, "Daddy's been beating mammy, and now he's gone back to the saloon; and he's took Nelly with him. Oh — oh!"

Lawrence was too familiar with the lower phases of local life to need further explanation of the boy's tears. "Which saloon has he gone to?" he asked; for, alas, there were many in the neighborhood.

"That one down there!" sobbed the child. "That one at the corner of Pig Alley."

"Very well!" said Lawrence, in a comforting tone of voice. "Now you go back home, and I will see what can be done."

The child at once started, on the run, and seemed to feel sure that the right thing would now be done by the minister. Lawrence knew the family, and was aware that the man often drank heavily, and sometimes was abusive to his wife and children. Evidently he had already drunk too much, and was now reckless and brutal. His taking his little girl with him, as he went to get more liquor, was indicative of this. The minister saw his duty clearly. He must go straight down to that den and try to get the man away.

He walked rapidly along the street, toward the

saloon. A little group of people had gathered near the boy as the minister had talked with him, and this group now scattered, going their various ways, with the exception of one man. That man was the big fellow, Jim Kelsey, who followed the minister, with a vague protective interest in his grateful heart, and, unperceived, he entered the saloon just behind Lawrence.

The bar-room was one of the lowest of its kind, and made very little pretence at display of gaudy furnishings. A bar ran across one end, several casks stood in a row at the back, and the proprietor, a huge, pimply-faced fellow in shirt-sleeves and with disordered hair, was serving beer and whiskey to the half dozen seedy-looking customers who lounged on the counter. Lawrence at once saw his man; he knew him, somewhat, personally, and the little girl, whom the man held by the hand, served additionally to indicate him. He had just finished a glass of some strong stuff, and was calling for more. "Pass it along!" he growled; "I've got the rocks." And he flipped a silver piece on to the bar.

Although he was plainly the worse for liquor, already, the barkeeper did not hesitate, but took the money and was about to replenish the empty glass. At this point Lawrence stepped forward and said quietly, but with decision in his voice, "You mustn't give that man any more." And he looked the proprietor straight in the eyes, and waited.

He hoped that the matter could be settled without any disturbance; but the barkeeper was an unscrupulous and violent man, and flamed up in an instant. "Who in hell are you?" he exclaimed, savagely, glaring at the minister, who was fully six inches shorter than himself, but of an unmistakable "square-built," athletic appearance. "Comin' in here an' meddlin'?"

"This man has had enough," replied Lawrence. "You know the law about selling to a person in his condition." And he laid his hand gently on the drunkard's arm and said, in a low tone, "Now, come along, won't you? Let's take little Nelly back home!"

The man's face softened, as he recognized Freeman, and he stood rather stupidly quiet and undecided. The other drinkers now took notice of the situation, and evinced a growing interest. The bar-keeper's wrath increased. "You damned, meddlin' parson," he roared, "I'll learn you to mind your own business." And he strode out around the end of the bar, and came up to the minister, with red face purpling, and eyes full of wrath.

Lawrence knew that he was on the verge of serious trouble. His heart beat rapidly, and his face felt hot; but, as he wheeled about, letting go his hold on the drunken man's arm, and faced his assailant, nobody could detect — and most of those present were skilled observers in such matters — any sign of undue excitement in his manner.

The two faced each other, without a word, for a few seconds. Lawrence's unflinching eye and unexpected self-poise rather puzzled the ruffian; but he was bent on mischief, and felt that he had easy work before him. Luckily he was a bit slow in his muscles, and when he drew back his fist, which he now did, Lawrence's quick, sure eye and his college athletics gave him ample warning of the character of the blow. There was a clumsy feint with the left, and then a straight-out blow with the right, which, if it had hit its mark, would have badly battered the clergyman's countenance. But when the arm, with its rolled-up, soiled shirt, reached its full extension, Lawrence's head was about four inches away on one side; and, in that moment of expended energy

and disturbed equilibrium, the bloated bar-keeper was open to a counter-blow, which Lawrence knew well how to give; and all his self-control was needed to restrain him from giving it. The old sparring habit asserted itself, and he would have liked greatly to give the "counter" which the open situation invited. But he must not. He *must* not. He felt all his muscles rise into nervous tension. His right arm grew rigid, and his hand closed on itself, despite all his efforts to restrain it. But no more. He stepped back, a pace or two. He earnestly desired to get out of this dreadful fracas, without disgracing himself, and defeating the purpose with which he had come. Still, there was no telling what would happen next. He believed he could protect himself from this big, clumsy, drink-soaked ruffian; but to do it by blows — that he deeply dreaded.

The other inmates of the room stood looking on, with much apparent delight. Street fights and bar-room rows were not of themselves novelties, but this one, with a bar-keeper and a parson as principals — this offered a pleasing variation on the usual kinds.

At this point one of the loafers called out, "Say, Mike, the feller's game; better leave him alone!"

"Curse him!" spluttered the bar-keeper, boiling with perplexity and fury. "I'll learn him. I'll give him wot he'll carry away with him." And, casting a glance at the counter, he stepped back, snatched a big black bottle from it, and came at the minister with a rush.

Matters looked threatening for "the cloth," in that instant. There was no question of the brute's intention. One more second and his shorter antagonist would need to evolve some very clever lines of defence, or be battered to the floor.

But something happened. It was Jim Kelsey who happened. He had already happened in, as we have

seen, closely and quietly behind Freeman, and he now happened to be standing near him as the savage bar-keeper raised the heavy black bottle for a murderous blow. And then, ere that blow could fall, his great bony fist and powerful arm shot out and across, and knocked bar-keeper and bottle, in a demoralized heap, to the floor, and into a corner between the counter and a large stove.

It was a wicked blow, and the man on the floor lay very still for several seconds. "You damned rum-slinger," muttered Jim, who was by no means to be numbered among the saints, but knew a real friend when he had one. "You everlastin' whiskey bum, I'll learn you somethin'." And he stood over the prostrate wretch, glancing down on him as if he wished he would get up and offer opportunity for more instruction.

There was a painful silence throughout the place, for several seconds. The bar-keeper stayed on the floor. Then Jim constituted himself master of ceremonies, and took the drunken father by the arm, with little Nelly still clinging to his hand, and led him, unresisting, out of the door. Lawrence Freeman followed, and when all were outside, he suddenly stopped. "Wait a moment, Jim," said he; "I wish to know who owns this building, this property. I may like to tell him about his tenant. Or I may report the bar-keeper to the police. They will take away his license if I suggest it. He was selling to this man when the man was in bad condition, as you saw."

"Just as you say," assented Jim, cheerfully. "Only I happen to know who the owner is. Wilbur Blaney is his name, and he —"

"Are you sure about that?" exclaimed Lawrence, in some surprise, for he had commonly understood that Blaney hadn't a cent in the world.

"Oh, yes, I am," said Jim. "I know one of the families upstairs, and they pay rent to Blaney."

"Perhaps Blaney is only an agent for somebody else," suggested Lawrence, speaking chiefly to himself. However, he turned and walked away, and accompanied the three to the house where the father and child lived. At that point Jim suggested that the minister leave the case in his hands; and as he had certainly managed it well so far, and as Lawrence had not yet eaten his third meal for that day, Jim was intrusted with the case, and the minister walked slowly and thoughtfully to his home.

As fortune had it, he found Mr. Marshall sitting with Mrs. Freeman, having come over to ask about certain repairs on the roof of the chapel. After these matters were decided upon, Lawrence recounted the affair in the saloon, much to Mrs. Freeman's uneasiness. Then came naturally the query about Blaney's ownership of the building. Mr. Marshall knew the property, or had noticed it, and was surprised at the suggestion that Blaney owned it. "Why, we've always considered that Blaney just lived from hand to mouth," he remarked, "and we never expected him to do anything toward expenses in the church. That property isn't worth much, but still, if he really owns it, he's worth a great deal more than most people suppose."

"Blaney is a discouraging type, from the moral and spiritual point of view," remarked Lawrence, "but as a study in human nature, he is most interesting. He has a quick, clear mind — almost a brilliant mind; but he never has seemed to accomplish anything. He has had a try at all sorts of things, too. I have often thought, as I have analyzed him, that if he had started in academic ways, he might have known and taught one of the sciences, or a language, extremely well. He is a born

teacher. What a pity that he didn't happen to turn that way, instead of failing at so many kinds of business! Let me see, what is he engaged in just now?"

"Insurance," said Mr. Marshall. "He is an agent for the Great Northern Fire and Marine Company. Our church property is insured there. He does better at that than at anything he's tried, so I'm told; but that isn't saying much. Why, a few of us made up a couple of hundred dollars for him, three years ago; he was in bad straits." Then the clear-headed miller relapsed for a moment into a revery, and presently remarked: "I don't see how he can own property like that. I — I — well, I don't quite like the looks of things." And he tugged away at his big, bushy, black beard, and buried his nose in it and bit at it, as if thus he could solve the mystery.

"I may take a little time," he continued, "and inquire into the matter. Yes, I think I will."

And after a little general conversation, he grasped his hat, bade his friends good night, and went out.

CHAPTER XI

A PULPIT SUCCESS

"He preached upon 'breadth,' till it argued him narrow —
The broad are too broad to define;
And of truth until it proclaimed him a liar —
The truth never flaunted a sign."

— EMILY DICKINSON.

LET it be borne in mind that in Emmanuel Church, as in most churches, there was a certain number of people who saw what were the true aims of a religious organization, and desired to have these aims realized, by reasonable and proper methods. But such persons, from their very delicacy of feeling and sound sense of propriety, are usually not much in public view, and their voices not loudly and aggressively raised. In Emmanuel Church this element waited and hoped, and tried to be pleased with whatever policy was adopted. As a whole the church had now obtained what it had desired. In changes of pastorate, a church usually seeks, instinctively, in a new minister, qualities opposite to those of the retiring incumbent; and, doing this, it usually gains opposite merits and also opposite defects. If the former minister was light complexioned, then dark-haired candidates will strike the congregation's eyes with favor. If the former minister was short in stature, the new one must be tall; and so on, through all qualities, physical and mental.

In accordance with this law of contrasts, the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay, D.D., was very acceptable, from

almost every point of view. He was dark, tall, bold, fluent, and held a very high opinion of his own value. Mr. Freeman could be bold and even fluent at times. When some humane cause sought support at his hands, or some great truth laid hold upon him, he expressed himself with a vigor and clearness and freedom, which surprised friends and confounded opponents. But, ordinarily, he was not talkative; partly because he felt the futility of much of the public declamation which is so customary in this country, and partly that he did not have the temperamental loquacity which is so useful to public men, especially when supplemented by tact and discretion. Carnaquay, on the contrary, dearly loved to talk. The mere expression of his ideas, on any subject, was a delight to him. It was, primarily, the field which the ministry offered for speechmaking, which had brought him into it. He had, too, a facile mind, and readiness in the use of words. The result was that the congregation of Emmanuel Church got what it wished; their pastor was — as they often affirmed — "*a pulpit success.*"

Carnaquay was a fearless man. Fear often proceeds from keen perceptions and sensitive apprehensions; and all such delicate machinery was left entirely out of the new minister's make-up. He feared neither men nor angels, good or bad; and he loved the position of domination which the pulpit afforded him. Neither reverence, nor delicacy of taste, nor sympathy, was an obstacle to his free expression of himself; and this gave him a satisfying air of assurance, as he preached, but it also involved defects. He played havoc with the accepted tenets of theology, and became known speedily as "a very advanced thinker." This seeming advancement of his proceeded not at all from prolonged and profound study and reflection and serious judgment,

but simply from his lawlessness of mind. He knew and cared very little about truth, of itself, but was keenly alive to the themes and emotions which were good material for dramatic presentation.

Of course people flocked to hear him. His popularity was quickly established; in a month, after his arrival, the congregation was doubled. Then it became still larger. The gallery seats grew in demand. Not all who came rented seats at first; but, as preference was given to pewholders, the pews soon were taken. After that chairs were brought in, and every nook and corner was filled; even the platform was used, and Messrs. Blaney, Mixer, Pidge, and others were persuaded to occupy seats in this elevated position, thus throwing open a score of sittings on the floor of the church.

Emmanuel Church prospered. So Dr. Mixer and others said, and Mr. Pidge's books ratified the judgment. Mr. Pidge's manner took on an unprecedented boldness. He felt the dignity of his treasurership. When bills were presented, he had not to temporize and explain, as formerly, but he responded promptly with checks, and had the comfortable sense of a considerable surplus instead of a chronic "de*fis*sit." Mr. Marshall had been blandly invited by the minister to join the other dignitaries of the church, on the platform, at public services; but he awkwardly, though firmly, refused. All his instincts were against such publicity. Carnaquay read him fairly well, and nearly persuaded him, by appealing to him as an official of the church, to do this distasteful act as a duty. But even that adroit appeal failed, and the stanch mill-owner sat hidden away in the midst of the congregation, and, from that shelter, enjoyed the fluent speech and fervid declamation of the occupant of the pulpit.

As Carnaquay's success became assured, his style

broadened, and his self-confidence — never conspicuously absent — became even more pronounced. He strode back and forth, on the front edge of the platform, like an admiral on the quarter-deck, with his ship in hot action. He brandished books high above his head, and dashed them to the floor, in an excess of conviction. He ran his long, white fingers through his long, black hair, and refuted Plato, Hegel, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and many others, with an ease and speed that was very pleasing to the congregation. It did not so much signify to them what he refuted or attacked or lauded, so long as the play of pyrotechnic fires went on. He was masterly at vivid narration, was Carnaquay. If he had not committed himself to the pulpit, he might have done something as a fiction writer. Some of his most entrancing discourses were composed, almost wholly, of minute descriptions of places which he had not seen, glowing narrations of events which never happened, and vivid dialogues between persons who never met. He preferred texts which did not hamper his exuberant fancy. Give him one hint of a man's character, and he would build up a structure which was complete, and would reel off the possible experiences of that man as if they were not only probabilities but certainties. Let him but take the one word, "Malchus," — the name of the impulsive Roman soldier whose ear was smitten off in Gethsemane by Simon Peter, — and he would fill nearly an hour with the history of that obscure individual, giving scenes in his life, as if by a contemporary, and detailing dialogues and soliloquies as if taken down by a shorthand reporter. Such titles as "Apples of Gold" and "A Basket of Fruit" and "Priceless Gems" were peculiarly well adapted to his free style. They were capable of being turned in almost any direction, — historic, industrial, poetic, or ethical, — and they were

susceptible of limitless illustration by anecdotes. The books most regularly used by him were collections of anecdotes. He had a faculty of telling these stories as if he had seen the actions of the participants; for example, when he dressed up the brief scene between Pyrrhus and Cineas, giving verbatim and *in extenso* the questions and replies of those two persons, the auditors felt their blood tingle sympathetically, and made sure that their preacher must have some private sources of information, quite hidden from ordinary historians.

Yes, the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay was a success — "a pulpit success." Mr. Pidge said, in an awe-struck tone, "Our minister is awful smart;" and Dr. Mixer smiled silently, and sank back in content into his big collar, and the thick fold of adipose tissue around his neck rolled up into the roots of his hair, like a swelling wave that surges up the beach and is lost amid the marsh-grass. Mr. Blaney wore an "I told you so" air, spoke with cautious approval, and at times intimated that the pastor's style of oratory was about the sort with which he himself was naturally endowed, if only he had chosen to develop it. Also, at times, among intimate friends, as a mark of confidence, Blaney kindly pointed out defects in the preacher's pronunciation, and spoke of the impossibility of one man's possessing all the virtues. As for Mr. Marshall, he was much under the glamour of the reverend gentleman's art, and greatly enjoyed hearing him; yet, at times, he was conscious within himself of a distrust which he could not analyze. Carnaquay, he had decided, was a generous man, not mean and niggardly; fully qualified to look after his own interests in all his business transactions, — which came, at times, to Mr. Marshall's knowledge, — yet easy and free in giving small sums to various needs and causes. Perhaps the most puzzling characteristic of the fascinating orator, as

studied by the mill-owner, was the way he had of praying with eyes wide open and with vigorous gesticulations. Mr. Marshall was a man of sensitiveness and reverence, and he could hardly credit his eyesight when, one day in church during the prayer-time, as he lifted his head to reach after his handkerchief, he discovered that the preacher was offering prayer in this singular and, to him, almost sacrilegious fashion. To be sure, the Rev. Ronald's prayers were never to be distinguished, in voice or spirit, from his sermons. You needed the assistance of eyesight, to determine which kind of address it was. His sermons were generally strong-voiced and instructive and dominating; so were his prayers. His sermons were often friendly and familiar, and even condescending; so were his prayers. In fact, there was no vital difference between the two, in voice or manner, except the difference in the angle at which they were delivered. The sermons were sent forth in the plane of the horizon and below it. The prayers were propelled outward and slightly above the horizon; so it was evident that the preacher had some sense of a higher and lower, in the structure of the universe, and was willing to concede, at times, that there was a Being in the world, above him. As to the literary form of his discourses, there was a lack of organic unity in them which would have perplexed even a professor of homiletics. He threw together fragments of description and exhortation and narration, entirely with reference to their separate worth, and with no reference to their combined effect. Sometimes he gained an apparent harmony of purpose by such striking titles as "Three Johns of Christian History," or "Four Famous Henrys," a mechanical combination of parts being thus achieved, rather than a chemical or organic union. But the sermons abounded in rhetoric, of a florid kind,

and he was commonly understood to have "a great gift of language," in the exercise of which "gift" he was much like some luxuriant, expansive grape-vine, loaded with leaves, but bearing little fruit.

The Rev. Ronald always kept in touch with the public life around him. He made friends with the newspaper reporters, and often wrote letters to the daily papers. Also he joined various orders, "Knights" of this, and "Templars" of that, and "Most Illustrious Chevaliers" of the other. He was voted a capital fellow, in all these clubs, and could tell a story and crack a joke, with great acceptability. He soon was in demand as an after-dinner speaker, at the "banquets" of these societies, and made friends wherever he went. He also varied the order of his Sunday services by inviting various bodies of men to attend, in their corporate capacities; he thus imported into Emmanuel Church, from time to time, the firemen of the city, and the railroad employés, and the Grand Army of the Republic, and the policemen, and others. To each organization he preached an appropriate sermon, and did it with considerable skill. So that easily he was the most conspicuous figure in the pulpits of the city, and was always called upon to offer prayer, or to introduce speakers, at municipal functions.

Like most professional men who have been denied thorough professional training, he was very desirous to pass as well trained and "scholarly." Therefore, he frequently carried some serious-looking book about with him, and when waiting for his change, at the store-counter, or while riding in the street-cars, he gave close study to his book. The shallowness and obtrusiveness of this make-believe studiousness was not apparent or offensive to the average clerk or carpenter who happened to see it (and the reverend *poseur* took good care that many persons should see it); so that Carnaquay's reputation for

profound learning grew apace, among people who had no conception of what really profound learning was; and the smatterer passed as an authority on nearly all subjects.

Regarding the Sunday-school, there was the same energy shown, as in other departments of the church. Personally the minister did not like children; he was too much absorbed in his own affairs to give them that sympathy which young people crave. The smaller children always annoyed him by their restlessness, and with difficulty he kept his temper when thrown much among them; that, however, did not prevent his preaching an excellent sermon on "The Needs and Nurture of Childhood." And he started a boys' brigade, and introduced banners for banner classes, and had prizes, and arranged Sunday-school concerts, which were unrivalled in the history of the parish. He managed — did this man of infinite ingenuity and exhaustless energy and unabashable self-confidence — to infuse a vitality into every part of the church which he touched. It was pleasurable and stimulating, but had very little moral or spiritual bearing on the week-day conduct and character of those who so energetically seconded his efforts.

There is one part of every clergyman's round of duties, which makes especial demands upon his capacity for sympathy. It is his parish calls. If he is lacking in sympathy, emotional or intellectual, he is bored by them and makes them in a mechanical way; but if he is able to throw himself unreservedly into the minute affairs of the people who call him their spiritual guide, he finds inexhaustible interest in their hopes and joys, and disappointments and failures. Carnaquay was quite out of place in such a field as this; but he had great tact, and was not shy, and he had learned how to meet the demands of the parochial part of his profession, with sin-

gular cleverness. He always came into a house and went out again, as if in a hurry ; he often apologized for his haste, said he was pressed for time amid the endless duties of his busy life. Of an afternoon, even if he had been sitting for hours in his room, comfortably smoking, and reading a novel (he was very fond of Marryatt and Clark Russell, but kept such books under lock and key), he rushed through his parish calls, as if driven by a sense of a hundred engagements and appointments. He knew how to give soft, purring responses to complaining old women, responses which conveyed no intelligent perception of their troubles, but were usually agreeable and soothing. Then, too, he could, by a desperate effort of will, and for a very brief period of time, catch up and dandle dirty, struggling infants in crumpled dresses ; but he hated this kind of call. He always made short calls, and calmly contrived, if it were possible, to throw the responsibility for the brevity of the call on the person he was visiting. "I know you are a very busy woman," he managed to say, "and I must not take more of your time." And he was up and away before the hostess could find her tongue to assure him that she hoped he would remain longer. Failing to discover a conventional nail on which to hang this effective terminal remark, the pastor sat restlessly a few minutes, then pulled a long face, and spoke of the exacting nature of his studies, and moved toward the door, with apparent regret veiling an inflexible will to get outside as soon as possible. Thus he often made a score of calls in an afternoon, and kept careful record of the same, to be duly published in the annual report of the parish.

He also did a great deal of surreptitious and illegal calling. "What do I mean by that?" I mean that he overstepped the code of his profession and the bounds of his parish, and called — whenever he could find an excuse for

it — on families belonging in other churches. Always he had some plausible reason for such calls; he was "not calling officially, but just as a neighbor"; or he "just called to inquire," etc.; or, "you are a sister of Mrs. Jones, in Emmanuel Church;" and so on. He was very adroit about it, and when once inside the door, could make himself extremely agreeable. Thus he considerably extended his range of acquaintance, and always gave a very friendly invitation to "come around and visit our church," or to "come and hear our excellent tenor."

Still another series of calls, by this enterprising clergyman, should not fail of mention. These were calls of which he kept no written record, and they were made upon Miss Metcalf. Carnaquay could no more keep worldly advancement out of his plans than could the most active speculator on Wall Street. Therefore, it was by the veriest instinct that he made himself aware of the fact that Miss Metcalf was the possessor of a large income; and, learning this, he found her attractiveness greatly enhanced. She was at least ten years older than himself; but what were ten years when compared with ten times ten thousands of dollars! So he became a frequent visitor at the fine old colonial house which she had inherited, ate many a good dinner at her table, and paid the handsome spinster frequent compliments. Miss Metcalf, like every woman, was hungry for affection, and her eagerness for this blunted her naturally keen critical faculty, as the tall, self-reliant clergyman bestowed compliments, at first on her cooking, then upon her house, and finally and freely upon herself. It is always safe to extend compliments to a woman. When one man praises another, directly, unless the two are old friends, the man praised becomes at once suspicious; he begins to ask himself

what this complimentary remark has behind it; he looks at it as a bait, and guards himself against taking it and the concealed hook with it. But a woman's heart is so predisposed to love and tenderness, that she believes against her judgment; and a gentle phrase, a sympathetic tone, opens her to attack, and blinds her to harsh realities.

Thus it was with the snowy-haired Miss Metcalf. She fluttered, despite herself, as Carnaquay's firm grasp closed over her own delicate fingers, and her tell-tale nervousness of speech showed the calculating man that he was looked upon with favor. He had no formulated plan in thus advancing himself in her affections; it was his general aim to establish himself in the good opinion of all the people he met. In Miss Metcalf's case he merely pushed his general purpose to greater lengths, being partly grateful for the dinners, partly circumspect toward an important pewholder, and then, beyond that, finding a mild amusement in acting his part of admirer. It was really the woman's wealth, which, even unknown to himself, gave greatest attraction to her in his eyes; yet personally she was far from distasteful to him.

Let it not be assumed, however, by the reader of this narrative, that Carnaquay was unconscious of the freshness and bloom that usually accompanies young girlhood. He was very keen in his sense of pleasure at the sight of a sweet, sunny face like that of Olive Marshall's, for example. She was a slender girl, with luxuriant flaxen hair, soft, appealing blue eyes, and a mouth whose red lips curved and arched with daintiness and grace. To be sure her voice was untrained, and often declared her plain, humble ancestry; and she clipped the tails from off participles, as if they had been evolving tadpoles; but that barbarous curtailment was

perpetrated, as are most cruelties, under the stress of excitement. Normally she spoke gently, and her caressing voice and appealing eyes, and round, pliant figure made a distinct impression on the dark, angular minister; besides, her utter simplicity and innocence were very attractive to him, dramatic nature that he was, always instinctively acting some part.

Olive, like most young girls, was more than half a hero-worshipper; and she gave the new minister much the same sort of confidence which she had given to Mr. Freeman. Whatever were the judgments of her shrewd father, regarding Carnaquay, he did not choose to taint her innocent admiration by any adverse criticism of the man who thrilled her, each Sunday, by his impassioned sermons. She was not a shallow mind, but her experience of men and women was limited, and she yielded freely to the fascination of Carnaquay's virile voice and manner.

Often the two exchanged a few words, in Sunday-school, or after church, or at a sociable. The minister was not invited to the mill-owner's table, as yet; for ambitious Mrs. Marshall, although she had expended money abundantly in furnishing her home, was still distrustful of herself, as she might be revealed by her dinner-table; therefore, the Rev. Ronald saw Miss Olive only brokenly and briefly. But she was a charming young creature, still an impressionable school-girl; and while he spoke of her lightly, to her mother, as a child, he often found himself tenderly picturing what she would be in three or four years, then in two or three years — yes, even in one year.

However, Miss Metcalf was the person whose door-bell he oftenest rang; scarcely a week passed that the bachelor minister was not invited to Miss Metcalf's house; and there he spent many comfortable hours,

dividing his attention between venison, *café parfait*, chartreuse, imported cigars, and much conversation on politics and investments.

The Rev. Ronald Carnaquay was not a man, however, to lose sight of the essential demands — as he understood them — of his profession. He knew well that parish calls and Sunday-school work, and public speaking at dinners, were not the main avenues of a minister's effort, and were not the chief sources of his power. Therefore, it was his preaching which claimed his greatest interest; and his pulpit he made his throne.

He kept a superintending eye, also, on the large congregation, both regular members and strangers, and his keen glance singled out the individuals, who were worth capturing and shaking hands with, after the services. These worthy persons, however they may have realized, on reflection, that the motive of the alert preacher, as he leaped toward them, was essentially that of the Chatham Street second-hand clothing dealer, who rushes out and clutches victims from among the passers-by, — however they may have known this in their hearts, they could not but feel flattered that the powerful orator should kindly descend from his eminence, and chat with them freely and familiarly. And they were much inclined to believe, — against their better judgment — that the cordial invitation to come again was given, in an apostolic passion for the welfare of their immortal souls.

Early among the Sundays after Ronald Carnaquay had become the accepted incumbent of Emmanuel pulpit, he had noted, far back in one corner, a very bright, rose-tinted, rounded female face, among the regular attendants of the church; and the piquant, penetrating, almost defiant mien of this tastefully dressed young person aroused his interest, for he recollected seeing

her on two previous occasions. One was when he had casually visited a sewing school, in a lower ward of the city, and had seen this young person instructing a group of frowzy little girls. He had merely looked in at the door, by mistake, and had not spoken to her; but her bright, fearless, questioning look had made an impression on him — a passing impression, that was all. But a week later he found himself in a street-car, directly opposite the same oval face and coquettish ringlets, and could hardly keep his eyes off her. She, for her part, gave not the slightest look of recognition, and he was left quite in the dark as to her identity. But there was some indefinable charm about her poise and self-possession, and her calm, unshrinking gaze, which gave him a pleasurable anxiety to meet her again.

And here, in church, by some perplexing turn of chance, his searching glance had found her out. He was startled and yet gladdened by the discovery. For that very reason, however, he was cautious and circuitous in approaching her. Was she a regular attendant? She kept in the background, did not seem inclined to seek his acquaintance, and accordingly was all the more stimulating to his fancy. He took occasion to inquire carelessly of Mr. Pidge who she was; and that gentleman of accurate mind, but somewhat defective speech, hastily "guessed" it was Mis' Guthrie.

Enough for that time; and the Rev. Ronald found himself more and more interested in the supposed "Miss" Guthrie, who was always in her place in the church; and he frequently sought to draw, from her bright, critical countenance, some evidence of approval in his more daring flights of eloquence. But in vain. The young lady sat erect and calm, two or three fugitive ringlets peeping from beneath a very tasteful little hat, and seemed to give intelligent attention, but not any marked sign of

pleasure. At the close of service she always walked rapidly out, and the active preacher, with all his speed, had not yet been able to overtake her.

One Sunday, Miss Metcalf invited her pastor to go home with her and dine. This invitation he was not averse to accepting, as he already knew how carefully and skilfully Miss Metcalf's cuisine was conducted. That lady would have preferred, of her own choice, to have the minister all to herself, but she had a keen sense of social conventions, and therefore said, as they left the church, "Isn't there somebody you would like to have join us, Dr. Carnaquay? What is enough for two is enough for three, you know."

Then it occurred to the minister that this might be a fortunate opening, but he was too wary to rush blunderingly toward it. "I hardly know that I care for any one," he replied indifferently; and at once added, with a bow and that stage chivalry which most women love, even though they understand its hollowness, "I certainly do not need another person, so far as my own pleasure is concerned;" but, being graciously pressed by the lady of the snowy locks, he carelessly remarked "that there was a Miss Guthrie whom he had not yet met, and —"

"Not *Miss* Guthrie," interrupted Miss Metcalf, who was as convenient as a blue book in all social matters. "You must mean *Mrs.* Guthrie; she is a young widow and a charming person."

Luckily the large black eyes were not on her minister's face, as she thus conveyed what was to him surprising and somewhat disturbing information. Possibly his silence signified something to her; for she at once added, "A very charming person, though rather too bookish to suit me, and a trifle free with her tongue."

"She seems rather young, and — and —" Mr. Car-

naquay was about to say "fresh looking, for a widow," but changed it advisedly to "frivolous."

The change was a discreet one, and his companion developed his suggestion freely, but closed by saying that she would gladly send and invite Mrs. Guthrie, so soon as the two reached her house. Mrs. Guthrie was a neighbor, and the message would reach her speedily.

The plan was carried out, and the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay presently was introduced, in Miss Metcalf's parlor, — now free from the commercial atmosphere of Messrs. Mixer, Pidge, and Blaney, — to Mrs. Adeline Guthrie, who returned his bold look with a glance that parried but did not give ground. The two women were now in house costume, and contrasted interestingly with each other. Heretofore, Carnaquay had seen Mrs. Guthrie, only in hat and wraps; now she had laid them aside, and seemed to gain in piquant beauty by the change. In the case of some women, disrobing is a contraction and a humiliating confession; in the case of others it is a bourgeoning and a beauteous revelation. For example, Miss Metcalf, when fully arrayed for the street, having her tall, willowy figure well gowned, her expansive hat resting on her billowy, snowy hair, her luminous black eyes active and intelligent, was a striking and fascinating person, whose age you would have named ten years under the hard calendar fact; but, as she laid aside jacket and tippet, and hat and gloves, she seemed to diminish and shrink; her wrinkles showed more plainly, and she became less and less an agreeable personality. But, as Mrs. Guthrie laid aside her wraps, the steps of the process were a continuous revelation. She seemed to unfold and to crescendo; her round, full neck, and finely modelled chin came into view, and the pink in her cheeks seemed to deepen, and her figure, somewhat full when in jacket and coat, softened down to graceful lines; so that the

Rev. Ronald, who was by no means unaccustomed to the society of certain kinds of women, found the sight of her very agreeable, and, in his free way, he was inclined to hold her soft, pink fingers, a trifle longer than was needful for form's sake.

But the soft hand had nerves and a will behind it, and was promptly and firmly withdrawn, as its owner remarked, nonchalantly, glancing at him with indifference, "I have often wondered how you would look, in a room with other people, and without the defence of that pulpit." Then she calmly sat down as if she had said the most casual thing in the world.

"Defence?" echoed Carnaquay. "I don't regard my pulpit in any such light." Then he saw that he had been irritated, and had shown his irritation in his quick retort. At once he resumed his usual, composed, and almost condescending manner, and said playfully, "You have perhaps noticed that I am at one side of it or the other, most of the time."

Miss Metcalf here showed traces of anxiety, either about the dinner or the turn in the conversation; and she at once remarked, in a nervous voice, "For my part, Dr. Carnaquay, I didn't notice much that you did or said this morning. I was so stirred up about those moths in the pew cushions. I never saw such a sight before. When I sat down, I saw a lot of them fly away."

"Not very appreciative on their part, I must say," rejoined the clergyman, with a bow and a great show of significance. "I certainly would not have acted in that way." Then he feared lest the conversation should linger, on that housekeeping level, and turned toward Mrs. Guthrie. "And, pray, how were the moths in your pew?"

Somehow he felt safe in asking the question, little as

he wished to discuss this entomological theme, unless in a sermon under the text of "Moth and Rust." He knew, by instinct, that moth-eaten cushions and derelict sextons would not be further exploited by her. Therefore, he was not surprised when Mrs. Guthrie, ignoring the whole subject, coolly said, "That was a splendid text of yours, this morning: 'Out of the heart are the issues of life.'"

The clergyman bowed, in a grave and professional way. He at once took her words in a complimentary sense. Still, she had by no means intended them to carry such an impression; and his pleased and suave expression altered, as she continued, "I heard a grand sermon on that text, once." Saying which, she looked down at the floor, and seemed to meditate.

Ronald's vanity was a bit ruffled. He was not sure as to exactly how much or how little this fearless but enigmatic young person meant. He sat back in his chair and coolly inquired, not without retaliatory motive, "Perhaps it was your husband who preached it; he was a preacher, I am told."

A subtle smile rested on the youthful widow's face, as she responded promptly, "Dr. Guthrie was a clergyman, but not much of a preacher; not — not a really able speaker, like you. He was a scholar; that is different."

There was a confusion of suggestion in her words. Carnaquay was puzzled. In one breath she bestowed praise and seemed to hint at the opposite. "Ah, so you consider the two callings essentially antagonistic?" he inquired, growing irritated at what he suspected was a thrust, and a thrust at his most vulnerable spot. "You think that no man can be both scholar and preacher?"

"That is what my husband was used to saying. He

believed that the oratorical or dramatic temperament might possibly be joined with the capacity for accurate research, but not often."

Here the maid announced the dinner; and the three went out into the well-appointed dining room, and seated themselves at the table, Carnaquay having taken a resolution *in transitu* that he would address himself more to his hostess, and thus quietly suppress the unmanageable young widow, and also show a proper appreciation of his invitation to dinner. The appointments of the table and the serving of the well-garnished viands naturally brought the talk to corresponding pragmatic levels; and here Miss Metcalf was much at ease. Also in all local gossip and family reminiscences, and plans for parish management, she was quite at home. Table intercourse, moreover, gave her opportunity for free and effective display of her shapely white hands, with their several blazing gem-set rings. She took great pride in her housekeeping, and especially in her marketing; she gloried in "good trades," and fancied herself more than a match for any grocer or butcher in town. One might have thought, upon hearing her discuss her close bargains, that Miss Metcalf was penurious in the extreme; but not so. She haggled over a "cent a pound," more from love of victory than from love of money. It was the same with her wardrobe; she delighted to save, at one point and another, but her little economies were far outweighed by the large sums she often put out on new garments. Her friends often teased her about her writing-paper and ink. These were her pet economies. She persisted in tearing off and retaining half sheets which were not written upon; and the ink in which she wrote her "few and far between" letters was quite too pale, from much watering.

In all such ways she was the reverse of Mrs. Guthrie, who, though "comfortably off," had by no means as large an income. In most other ways, also, the two seemed, to the watchful clergyman sitting there between them, complements of each other, in physical characteristics, and even more so in mental aptitudes. For instance, Miss Metcalf referred to the choir, thus: "I don't like our present choir." Here she paused to pass the olives. "I liked that contralto of last year, much better. This one is too tall to stand near those two short men. And her bonnet! Why, it's a crime! I think, anyway, that choir people — the women, I mean — ought to take off their bonnets. Don't you, Dr. Carnaquay?"

Before the clergyman could frame a proper response, Mrs. Guthrie interjected, "I'm afraid, Miss Metcalf, that you class choirs with small children, who should be seen but not heard." Then she continued, "I wish that Dr. Carnaquay would arrange some vesper services, like those we had formerly; I like a great deal of music in church."

This was precisely what the reverend gentleman did not like. In the first place he had but little fine taste for music ("powerful" as was his sermon on "The Harp of Judah"), and, secondly, he could not endure to sit still and see a congregation's attention held by another person or group of persons. His egotism was too great to allow him to be happy under such conditions. Therefore, having tried these much-vaunted "vesper services," in his previous parish, he did not purpose to duplicate such humiliating experiences in Emmanuel Church. But he preserved a wise and judicial bearing, as Mrs. Guthrie advocated the use of music in church, contracting his brow into a double furrow, which, in his case, did not mean calm deliberation, for his real decisions were

made with lightning-like rapidity, and, like a woman's, bordered on instinct.

"What you say is true, very true," he agreed, and prepared his salad discriminately. "The mayonnaise? No, thank you! I prefer the French dressing. True, very true! Music is a divine art; but we must not forget that the church has always attached great importance . . ." Here he skilfully distributed salt over the lettuce on his plate.

"Oh, I see that you know how important salt is," exclaimed Miss Metcalf. "Few people realize that it enriches food, even pastry, almost as much as does sugar or butter."

"Quite so!" responded the minister. "I learned that secret when I was camping out, just after my theological seminary examination. However, as Mrs. Guthrie justly remarked about music, 'It's a divine art.'"

"It was you who said that," interrupted that young woman, sententiously. She busied herself with her plate, as she spoke; and when the clergyman, half amused and half annoyed, looked across and gave her one of those bold, masculine looks which men often substitute for argument, and use to beat down delicate feminine rights and reasons, he found her head bent slightly over her plate; and his eyes encountered only the inclined angle of her smooth, broad forehead, and became entangled in the coquettish curls.

She was a puzzling problem to him. He had already made up his mind that she did not like him, but this made her more interesting; it gave him a challenge, and he liked challenges. But he must not show too open an interest in her; and he responded with marked deference to Miss Metcalf, when she asked about the renting of the gallery pews. "I don't think we are getting high enough rentals for them," she said.

"Don't you think, Dr. Carnaquay, that they are just as desirable as the pews on the floor?"

The minister agreed that they were, and artfully inquired, "What have you been accustomed to get for them in the past?"

"O dear!" exclaimed Miss Metcalf, "nobody knows." And then she added archly, "You must be pleased to learn that those seats were all empty before you came."

This was the agreeable reply which Carnaquay had angled for, having learned all about the pew-rentals of Emmanuel Church, before he had been settled over it a week. Still, he was greedy of praise, and his gesture of deprecation was very gentle and graceful.

From this point the conversation led more and more into administrative fields, and Carnaquay and his clear-headed hostess discussed the advisability of putting premiums on the best pews, the need which the church property showed of repairs and painting, and the suggestion which had been made of enlarging the Board of Trustees. In all these practical matters Miss Metcalf was singularly astute, as the minister plainly admitted to himself, and openly expressed to her. Still, he did not derive the pleasure from her conversation which he found in the crisp and somewhat reactionary remarks of his companion guest.

After the dinner came the customary cigar; and the Rev. Ronald looked the picture of content, as he lay back in the capacious, old, sleepy-hollow chair, and puffed successive rings with consummate skill. He had an indolent, luxurious way of holding his cigar, with two fingers; and occasionally he placed the lighted end partly under his nostrils, to catch the fine aroma. He was in good conceit with himself now, the fatigue of the morning's preaching having been allayed, in a measure,

by the excellent dinner. Therefore, he got on more harmoniously with the elusive young widow; and she, for her part, relaxed, perceptibly, the sharpness of her attacks on him. He was agreeable, and, setting aside his vanity and assertiveness, was possessed of some really likable qualities. The three were coming into a fairly good understanding with one another, and Miss Metcalf's anxiety regarding collisions between her two guests was now much diminished. Mrs. Guthrie kindly consented to sing one or two Scotch ballads, making a mock apology to the minister, as she went to the piano, because of the secular nature of the songs; but he carelessly remarked that a song which was good on week-days was even better on Sunday, and gave close attention to the singer.

He was naturally musical, though untrained; and the tenderness which the song expressed, contrasting as it did with the piquant and even acrid flavor of many of the singer's remarks to him — this added greatly to her charm, and produced an unusual unrest in his soul. He did not clearly understand her; he was actually a little afraid of her, yet he felt himself much drawn toward her.

After a while Carnaquay artfully led the conversation around to the subject of poetry, and then, when urged by Miss Metcalf, — the request being mildly seconded by Mrs. Guthrie, — he recited some selections. He gave page after page of Longfellow and Whittier, a part of Poe's "Raven," and a poem by Will Carleton. He had a wonderful memory, and recited with intelligence and sympathy.

When he finished, Miss Metcalf, following her usual way, was profuse in praise and thanks; but Mrs. Guthrie, although she cordially thanked him, added no word of commendation. She knew he was eager to

hear it, and she was aware that the recitations were really excellent; but her firmness and frankness were capable of running into obstinacy, under dangerous conditions like the present, and she uttered no word that could be construed by the clergyman into praise.

Finally, the fitting moment for departure came, and the reverend gentleman somewhat reluctantly went away. He had counted on walking home with Mrs. Guthrie; but that lady excused herself, having, as she said, one or two matters to talk about, with Miss Metcalf. How real this excuse was, and just how the young widow regarded him, Ronald Carnaquay debated with himself, without any satisfactory conclusion, all the way home, and afterward.

CHAPTER XII

SPOTS ON THE SUN

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." — Proverbs xxix. 18.

Emmanuel Church continued to "boom." There was every reason for it. Dissatisfied and disappointed as were many earnest, devout persons in that body, yet the controlling majority had gained what they wished. The Rev. Dr. Carnaquay was a large figure, in parish and in city. The congregations had outgrown the existing church edifice, and an enlargement of the building was planned. Carnaquay himself took an active part in raising the money for the new outlay; he gave two hundred dollars himself, for he was not a mean man, in matters of money. Besides this, he went about asking subscriptions; and at this sort of work he was very apt and efficient. When Carnaquay approached a man, and suggested in an easy, casual way, that the man give the trifling sum of fifty or five hundred dollars to so important a cause, the confident air with which the request was made greatly aided in loosing the purse-strings of him who was asked. Carnaquay seemed to be offering the man a great privilege, an enjoyable opportunity; and few had the hardihood to attempt to break down the genial confidence and assurance with which he approached them.

So the additional wing to the church was erected and furnished, and began to fill with — I was about to

say "worshippers"; but there was all too little of the worshipful spirit apparent in the newcomers. Carnaquay himself had but slight conception of that humility and longing of the soul with which a devout man approaches the Infinite One. On the contrary, his gospel was of the earth, earthy — not grossly so, but comfortably and cheerily of the earth; he was really an Epicurean philosopher, of a shallow pattern. He taught (and thought he believed) that earth was a first-rate sort of place, and we must be happy here; happiness, he urged in a score of ways, is the rightful heritage of man. He was very comfortable himself, with his ample salary, his robust health, and his acknowledged power in the community; therefore, he believed that other people were in happy conditions. He laughed a great deal, in a noisy and not quite deeply seated way; and in every sermon he besprinkled jokes and humorous stories, which he rendered with all the dramatic action of a clown in the circus, and was not displeased at the sallies of laughter, which at times echoed through the church.

Another exemplification of this dramatic quality in Carnaquay was to be seen in the way in which he occasionally deprecated or decried the pulpit success which is commonly supposed to be proved by large congregations. It was surprising and puzzling to see the man, in the full flush of his success, standing at his reading-desk, with a church crowded to the doors, and to hear him speak scornfully of the slight value of a "mere crowd," as testimony to success. "Any mountebank could draw a crowd," he exclaimed, "if that is all that is wanted." And saying it, strode back and forth across the platform, and brandished his arms in a most athletic style. The truth was, that by this bold denunciation of what were really his own points of weakness,

he aimed at warding off adverse comment on himself. It was a daring though rather successful theatrical ruse.

Some amusing results followed the upturning and overturning, which had come to the parish and congregation from the new life and excitement aroused by the vigorous, stimulating influence of the new minister. As, for instance, when old Miss Anthony, for many years a staunch member and supporter of the church, began to show herself in her long-unoccupied pew. The second time she came to church, a woman, a stranger to her, already was seated in her pew; this stranger seemed much at home, and even handed Miss Anthony a hymn-book (Miss Anthony's own property, with her name on the cover). The courtesy was stiffly declined, and the service proceeded to its close. After the benediction, the stranger leaned over and offered her hand, saying in a most hospitable voice, "I am very glad to see you here, I hope you will come again; we are always glad to welcome strangers."

"Strangers, indeed!" The Anthony gorge rose at that. And she told the story, at home, with much asperity, and deprecated, bitterly, the filling up of the church with such a rabble of "new people." (Anybody who had not lived in town, and been connected with the parish for at least twenty years, was considered a "new person" by such aborigines as the Anthonys and the Metcalfs.)

If this time limit of twenty years was the standard of "new" and "old," in the case of laymen and laywomen, what was the standard as applied to the minister himself? Exactly how long does a recently installed pastor remain "our new minister"? And when comes the transition to "our minister"? What the social or psychological laws are that govern this transition, this stage of moulting, I know not; but some-

where it comes, soon or late, as surely as the rust comes to the storm-exposed iron, or the brown dry tint settles upon the tree-leaf. Therefore this change came inevitably to the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay; and he was more quickly aware of it than was any one of his parishioners. However, he had anticipated it and was not disturbed. He was ambitious to the core, and did not intend to remain many years in Emmanuel Church; but any thought of a change, at present, was quite superfluous. His voice and manner had not ceased to have charm, and his stock of sermons and stories and descriptions was not yet perilously diminished. Still, the tongues of the gossips were well a-wagging, and plenty of people could be found who freely pointed out mistakes in his management, and faults in his manner. He was still the great luminary of the parish and town; but even the sun, the radiant centre of our planetary system, has been found to have opaque spots on it; how, then, could a lesser luminary, like the Rev. Ronald, hope to shine in pure, radiant effulgence?

That custom which the minister had, of praying with eyes wide open, and to the accompaniment of gestures — very graceful and appropriate gestures, — took hold of people's sensibilities more and more; it seemed more and more a performance, and less and less like a real petition to the Almighty. And people grew uneasy and rebellious about it, — the best and devoutest people. Then there were others of the parish, a less spiritual class, perhaps, who resented the use of the church vestry for "smoke talks." These had been introduced by the minister, and, although the lectures and talks were of an instructive character, there was an immense amount of tobacco burned; and the carpet and hangings were saturated with the fumes, and faint odors of it even

penetrated into the church, and were perceptible to delicate spinster nostrils on Sundays.

In another way, too, Carnaquay had given offence to some. It was in his friendliness with other denominations. He had exchanged pulpits twice with clergymen who were known as "liberals" and "progressives" — terms which mean one thing one day, and another the next; terms which please, when applied in a general way to one man, but become placards of warning, like a smallpox card, when fastened to some other man. Ronald Carnaquay was not at all a bigot; but this freedom of fellowship, on his part, arose not from intelligent recognition of the rights of independence in his fellow-preachers; it grew out of his lax moral and spiritual nature. He had no doctrinal prejudices nor spiritual antipathies against Calvinist or Arminian, simply because he had no moral or religious convictions. He had no convictions about the nature of God and the duty of man, but preached such views as he had picked up, in his scanty theological course, or such theories of life as he thought would be most acceptable and comfortable to his hearers. So he became friendly with anybody and everybody, and aroused opposition and distrust by it, among the doctrinal sticklers of his church.

These points of adverse criticism, however, were in the main not different from and no worse than those which are current, in most parishes, after the honeymoon of a new pastorate has waxed and waned. But there was a more significant kind of defect in the man, which came out in the case of the Murch child, who was sick with a bad attack of scarlet fever. Mr. Freeman learned about it through Mr. Marshall, and it was the first word of real condemnation which the mill-owner had expressed.

The facts were these. A family named Murch had

one child, who fell ill with scarlet fever. For several days the exact nature of the disease was not clearly known; as soon as it differentiated itself, the physician ordered the usual quarantine card to be tacked on the door, and forbade communication, as far as possible, with the outside world. The case grew worse, and developed into a bad form of throat ulceration. The Murch family were of a rather ignorant class of people, and had affiliations with the Roman Catholics about them, from whom they imbibed more or less of the priestly notions of a clergyman's office; and as their child became worse, they sent word to Dr. Carnaquay, asking that he would come and pray with them and the little sufferer.

The message was sent by a neighbor's son, a young man from whom undoubtedly the unpleasant story took currency. The story, as commonly reported, was that the minister, when asked to go to the house of sickness, at once assented; but, learning by a chance question the nature of the disease, and the aggravated form it had assumed, he hastily reconsidered his decision, and excused himself on the ground that he had forgotten an engagement, which was imperative with him, for the hour which he had named for his visit; and he then sent word that he would try to find some other suitable hour, in the midst of his pressing duties. But he never did; and the little child died, and the reverend doctor was away out of town, nobody knew where, "to be gone three days," when news of the child's death came to his house, and, with the news, the request that he officiate. So, in view of his absence, a local Methodist preacher was called in, and the rite of Christian burial was afforded the body.

This awkward bit of gossip went the rounds of the parish, and, although it came to the ears of the minister,

it was not satisfactorily contradicted. Because Carnaquay actually had been afraid, had retreated, and had been recreant to his duty. He, who could seem so mighty and fearless, upon the platform, and was indeed fearless in the presence of some forms of danger, was the veriest coward, in the presence of an insidious foe like a fever-germ. He had little or no sympathy with people in sickness, and had made no place, in his theory of human welfare, for accidents and disease and death.

Here was the weakest part of Carnaquay's professional equipment — his way of meeting scenes of sickness and death, in his parish; and the case of young Jackson will illustrate the point.

Jackson was a young man of twenty-two years, a house-painter by trade, and with a bad heredity for pulmonary weaknesses. He had been coughing more than a year, when Carnaquay came into the parish, and now was too feeble to work at his trade, and stayed in the house except on mild, sunny days. Carnaquay went to see him, and cheered him up wonderfully, with his health and hope, and his breezy way of telling stories. Other visits were made, and the sick young man was always glad to see his pastor. But the disease progressed, and the patient grew weaker and weaker. He lived with his mother, a widow, and his unmarried sister, a stenographer.

In this series of visits, made at intervals of a few weeks, by Carnaquay, the subjects of conversation were always suggested by him, and were such as might have been fallen into by any two men, in health, at a club or on the street. In fact, Ronald Carnaquay's theory of health and hope took on this special form, in such a case as this, that the sick person would be made better if his visitor could lead him to think he was better, and could

interest him in matters other than his own personal aches and pains.

This theory worked very well, in most cases; because most cases are slight illnesses, and most patients become convalescent. But there are some invalids who may be cheered and cheered, yet grow weaker; and some sad, pale faces, which may be forced into smiles by the antics and anecdotes of light-hearted visitors, but settle soon into a deeper, deadlier pallor; and thus it was with the poor young painter. At first he laughed, on equal terms of enjoyment, with the robust, strong-voiced clergyman; but, after a few months, as his vitality waned, his manner became more languid, his voice fainter, and his smile more fleeting; but there was no change in his clerical visitor's manner or method. To Carnaquay's thought there was one and only one thing to do, in all cases of suffering — cheer up the sufferer. So he went on, telling his stories and cracking his jokes, and discussing the last piece of political news, or the pros and cons of the next boat race. And more and more there came into the pale, drawn face in the big chair, a wistful look, and a patience with the visitor's chatter, which Carnaquay did not see or would not see.

Sometimes, as Carnaquay finished some bit of gossip or some story of active, strenuous life, and looked at the young man, as if expectant of a response, there came only a faint sigh; and the faded eyes, deep in their sombre hollowness, closed for a moment in weariness, and then opened, and their gaze seemed to cling to the minister's face, like fingers of entreaty. What young Jackson really desired was something more serious and more solemn than the minister was capable of, at his stage of development. What did a human soul, on the borders of eternity, care about the latest floating piece of society gossip? Or what did it care about the latest

trans-Atlantic record of the new ocean liner, when it was pausing on the brink of an unknown sea, and hesitated, and shrank, at the thought of the lonely voyage, that must soon come?

No; the great need of the young man was that this visitor, his pastor, a man accredited with interest in things divine, should talk calmly and sincerely with him, about the problems of life and death, man to man, and should with him speak, in the language of prayer, to the All Father, concerning the needs and destiny of the soul. The sick man had a right to expect this of his minister, but his expectations were not realized. He was sensitive, himself, about broaching topics of so personal a nature, although he and his faithful mother occasionally talked about them, and sometimes he expressed the wish that Dr. Carnaquay might say something which would lead up to them; but never a word came. Carnaquay could preach most eloquent sermons on the presence of God in the soul, and its glorifying of the daily conduct of men; but when he was expected to say the same things in simple language, — not to a stimulating assemblage of a thousand, but to one or two plain, hungry souls, much in need of such truth as he could bring to them, — then he halted and was dumb. In truth he had no real message. A "waiting congregation," in a large hall, acted like a powerful stimulant, on his nerves; and he could picture, in glowing phrases, the delights of heaven and the joy of there clasping hands with those who had gone before; but when called upon, in a dingy, ten-by-eighteen room, to tell a forlorn mother and her dying son, what he thought about the probability of their meeting again, and when, and how, — on this plain, practical side of the question he had nothing whatever to offer. His eloquence on Sundays did not arise from spiritual convictions and insights, but grew naturally

out of the excitement of the moment, and that strange exaltation which lifts most public speakers into fervor, as they gaze over a sea of upturned human faces.

So Carnaquay's visits to the sick-room became formal and constrained, and presently ceased altogether; for at last the sick man sent down word that he thanked Dr. Carnaquay, but was unable to see him. This was the message that was given, but at about the same period in the progress of the disease, his mother sent word to Mr. Freeman; and that true minister of Christ went regularly to the sick-room, and read and conversed with the sick man, who felt a great peace come over his soul, as the earnest, devout, and sympathetic clergyman spoke simply and tenderly of the love of God, and his care for all his children. There was an atmosphere of strength, mingled with tenderness, in Freeman's manner, as he came into the room, which is the sign and seal of the heaven-born minister or physician. Ordinarily, he seemed rather stern and reserved, almost with a military air; but those who had once looked up at him, from beds of weakness and pain, always maintained, thenceforth, that his rugged, scarred face was very beautiful.

"You talk so differently from Dr. Carnaquay," murmured Jackson, one day. "He preached grand sermons. I heard him three times; once he preached about the New Jerusalem — it was grand, powerful, the way he talked. I've often wanted to ask him about that sermon. It seems so near to me now — that other world." Then, after a pause, he added, more wearily, "But he seemed so different, when he sat here, from what he did — when — when he was preaching it there in the pulpit." Another pause, and he continued, with a sweet smile of content lighting his face, and giving a weak, confiding pressure to Freeman's hand: "Now you seem just the same here, that you used to in the

pulpit of our church. It's very strange. Everything is strange." His eyes closed, and he added, as if to himself, "What a grand preacher Dr. Carnaquay was!"

That was Freeman's fate—to be loved, not admired. For one brief instant the black mist of envy gathered in his breast; but in another instant it was cast out, and he was content to be — himself, and to give himself, in service, and to try to keep his soul "unspotted from the world."

Of course, when the end of the earthly life came to the poor, tired, young house-painter, Mr. Freeman was expected to conduct the funeral service. Carnaquay was not thought of, and, on the whole, was rather glad to be relieved from the unpleasant duty. He had an abhorrence of disease and death, which was like that of the lower animals; and although he was keen to feel the conclusions, prejudicial to himself, which might be drawn from incidents of this sort (and there were several of them), he was really glad to be relieved, at almost any cost.

There was, however, plenty of real courage in the man, and he always met opposition with defiance, rather than concession. So, when he read about the funeral, in the daily paper, he said to himself, "Well, Freeman is a good fellow, but he can't preach; I'm lucky to have him so conveniently near." Then he grappled resolutely with his next Sunday's sermon; and underneath the earnestness with which he prepared that discourse, and the vigor with which he gave it, was a certain defiance, as if he said, after each rounded period and following each cleverly told story, "I'll show you that I can *preach* — those of you who have been saying mean things about me."

There was at least one person, however, whose good opinion he was concerned about; and that person was

Mrs. Guthrie. She did not appear in church, for two Sundays after the dinner at Miss Metcalf's. Ronald Carnaquay's bold black eyes swept every lane and penetrated every nook of the congregation, as Henry Morgan's piratical brigantine swept the lagoons and inlets of the West Indies; but in vain — no sign of the clear, unflinching eyes, and oval face, and pink-tinted cheeks, and broad brow. He was made irritable, by her absence, at first with her, then with himself; he suspected that he had not appeared in a favorable light before her, at Miss Metcalf's. He had not made the impression which he always aimed at making. That was due, partly, to the presence of the somewhat exacting hostess; somehow he had not been able to talk to Mrs. Guthrie as he felt he could have talked, if they had been alone together. And he resolved to go and call upon her, the next week.

An excuse was easily at hand. Was there ever a church, or parish, that did not need teachers for its Sunday-school? So he would go and ask the young widow to serve in this capacity. It was possible to go and make the call, without any other avowed purpose than that of a "parish call"; but Carnaquay really felt slightly fortified by this definite errand; he saw his own unaccustomed hesitancy, and smiled sardonically at it.

Mrs. Guthrie was at home. She came down, at once. Miss Metcalf always kept him waiting; the cause of such delays, Carnaquay, though unmarried, knew perfectly well — he had lived with sisters. Mrs. Guthrie did not say that she was delighted to see him; she greeted him, however, in a frank and friendly way, and motioned him to a seat. When he had stated his errand, she replied, without delay, that she could not take the class. "I could not agree to teach such views as you expect to be taught," she added.

"Indeed!" responded the surprised clergyman. He had not held himself especially responsible for the views taught in his school. He had introduced some manuals of history and doctrine, which were recommended by a clerical friend. "And what is the matter with those views, may I ask?"

"They are simply untrue," answered Mrs. Guthrie. And she added, with a touch of facetiousness, "That is a slight matter, perhaps, but enough to deter me."

Carnaquay did not much care what views were or were not taught in the school, so long as everything went on in a brisk and businesslike way, and the attendance was large; he was not much concerned with the details of character building, and with the minute and difficult problems of the child's religious nature. Mrs. Guthrie, however, was sensitive to all such fine obligations and delicate responsibilities; and Carnaquay was instinctively aware that she would be so, even before she expressed herself. That was one of the causes of his interest in her. "I would not mind your imparting your own views, if only you would join our corps of teachers." And he added gallantly, "I am sure you could not greatly err."

Somehow, as he spoke, she perceived that he did not much care whether she taught or not. She already knew the clear and determined way in which he usually set about any plan in which he was really interested; and now he seemed willing to wander from topic to topic, instead of holding to the ostensible purpose of his visit. They talked, in a discursive way, on various themes, he seeming inclined to bring the talk to more personal and intimate subjects than she chose to allow. She had given up teasing him; it was so easy. A word of praise for some other preacher, and she could detect a narrowing of his eyelids, although his voice remained

undisturbed and his bow of assent was steady and self-possessed. Or a quiet suggestion of doubt as to the adequacy of unwritten sermons, and he quickly came out of his professional calm and grew warm in defence of his chosen method of preaching.

Now, after an hour's talk, with the subject of Sunday-school teaching left far behind, she found herself talking frankly, judicially, almost condescendingly, as he asked her what she did not like, in his sermons. "You know, I have nobody to give me really honest opinions," he said, with a humility that was unusual with him; "I get praise, a great deal of it, and some censure."

"You are very fond of praise, Dr. Carnaquay."

"We all are. What is more natural?"

"True," she agreed, "but some feel insulted by words which others would drink in greedily."

Whether he really understood or not, he *said* he did not, and she was forced to explain; she did not retreat. "I mean that some ministers are delighted and satisfied with praise that is given for qualities which might be creditable — to an auctioneer or the end-man in a negro-minstrel troupe; but other ministers, having higher ideals of the Christian ministry, would be humiliated and warned by such praise."

Carnaquay's face began to whiten and his under jaw grew rigid. He had courted plain speech, but this was more than he had bargained for — he, the popular preacher and successful public speaker. His voice lost its flexibility, as he asked curtly, "Then you believe my ideals of my profession are low?"

"Well, since you put it in that personal way, I answer that I do;" and the fires burned brightly in Mrs. Guthrie's cheeks.

Ronald Carnaquay arose stiffly, with a ceremonious bow. He spoke, "I thank you for your very great frank-

ness." The sarcasm in his voice was unmistakable. "It is somewhat overwhelming, perhaps because I am not used to being addressed in this way . . ." He was on the point, in his savage anger, of finishing, with a sneer, "by *ladies*." But even in his wrath he stopped short of that brutal ending. He had risen, intending to close the interview. He was manifestly angry, and did not try to disguise the fact. He was deeply wounded in his vanity. He forgot the ostensible object of his visit, and moved abruptly toward the door. But, at the critical moment, a diversion occurred, which completely altered the line of his thoughts, the current of his feelings, and perhaps the thread of this narrative. For a pet pug-dog, which belonged to another member of the family, had come in, unperceived, and had stretched himself comfortably beside the visitor's chair. Being one of those animals who are petted into calm indifference regarding all danger, and the instinct of self-preservation having become dormant, long since, in his canine bosom, he made no effort to anticipate the movements of the stoutly shod feet near him; and when the clergyman's foot came down, luckily not with full weight, on one of his extended paws, there followed such howls and whines that the room echoed, and its two human inmates responded involuntarily, the one with a truly feminine vocal expression of fear, the other with an energetic masculine exclamation of surprise.

The little creature made no effort to flee; he knew — judging human nature by the totality of his past experience, which is all that we human creatures can judge by — that the pain had been caused accidentally; and he simply sat up, in a helpless and entreating way, holding his jammed foot raised from the floor, and looking from one to the other, as if for an explanation and some sympathy.

Instantly all of Carnaquay's wrath evaporated. He was genuinely fond of animals. They were not intrusive, like children, asked no annoying questions, and gave unqualified affection and admiration. He impulsively stooped down, spoke words of real compassion and regret, patted the whining little creature on the head, and then gathered him carefully up in his arms; and he held him, talking to him and stroking him with an earnestness which even his noisiest sermonic periods lacked, — a warmth of kindness which his hostess had never before seen in him. For several moments he remained oblivious of her presence; then consciousness of his surroundings returned, as was indicated by his rearranging his coat and necktie, which had become slightly disordered in the exciting rescue.

He did not look Mrs. Guthrie in the face, at first; but, after putting the now quieted animal down, he came over to her, and, in a calm and conventional tone, apologized for the disturbance he had caused; then he extended his hand, bade her good-by, and went out; and the list of teachers in Emmanuel Church Sunday-school seemed in no prospect of being enlarged by his visit. Mrs. Guthrie took up the little creature, petted and fondled him, and reflected. Her countenance lost something of that defiant expression into which it had gravitated. She wondered if she had not been a trifle too plain, in her strictures on her visitor's character. Then she recalled his genuine remorse at having hurt the dog, and her lips even silently framed some of the tender words which his had so warmly uttered. Certainly the man had a tender heart, under all that husk of vanity and make-believe. Had she done just right in impugning his motives? She might have questioned, more properly and safely, any of his outer acts; but to presume to judge his innermost impulses and aims —

this was a rather unwarranted step. She recalled his reproachful looks — no longer angry and threatening and scornful, but silently reproachful — as he left the room.

That look! Was it a sincere expression of really wounded feelings, or was it a bit of dramatic action, on the part of a man, who, she knew well, was intensely dramatic by nature? There, at least, was his exclamation and surprise, and there were his first few impulsive words of pity; surely those were spontaneous and earnest enough to satisfy even her own lofty standard of affection for the lower animals. They were radically different, she reflected, from such voluble, evanescent expressions as Miss Metcalf often used — Miss Metcalf, who always talked loudly about her dear, dear pets (dogs, cats, or canaries), but parted with them very easily, as death claimed their over-fed bodies, and replaced them, in rapid succession, with new favorites, and never gave evidence of having known the pang of a passionate parting.

Mrs. Guthrie walked slowly back and forth in the room, holding the dog, who was now quiet; and presently she went to her apartments above, wrote a letter to Carnaquay, consenting to take a class, then sealed it with her seal, and began putting on her wraps to go out and post it. But, at the last moment, she paused, and took off her wraps, and deposited the sealed letter in her desk.

CHAPTER XIII

A DIFFERENCE IN METHODS

"No process is so fatal as that which would cast all men in one mould."—WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

RONALD CARNAQUAY left the house, in a crestfallen state of mind. You could not have detected it, had you met him at that moment; he was a man who was self-indulgent and uncontrolled in several ways, but in the main he made himself do what he wished to do; and his naturally enormous vanity, just now so seriously wounded, was the very quality in him which made him pull himself together, and assume a calm, smiling exterior, in readiness to greet any friend — and he had many — whom he might encounter. But when once at home, with the door of his study shut, he took his pipe and lighted it, while a frown settled down over his forehead, like a saturated cloud over a mountain top. He muttered continually to himself, and kicked a hassock out of his path, with unclerical impatience and vigor. He had not passed through an experience similar to the scene with Mrs. Guthrie, since he gave up "travelling" for the "trade." Then, occasionally, some irate customer had freed his mind, in monosyllabic Saxon, and Carnaquay had listened to some unpleasant statements. But when such talk came from masculine lips, there was always the possibility — if one chose to ignore its costliness — of giving *quid pro quo*, and thereby experiencing a sensation of relief; but in this case his hands had been tied by the fact of sex; also by the fact that

the daring young woman's words were not uttered in a noisy and vituperative way, but were soft and well modulated, yet firm and confident. Moreover, there had crept into the clergyman's mind — at least as a possibility, as a debatable proposition — the suggestion that perhaps she was right, at least in a degree. There was some subtle influence about her personality that made Carnaquay respect her mind and judgment; and now her judgment was that he had not high enough ideals, in his profession. Could she be at all correct?

He had never faced such a question before. He had seen the profession of the ministry solely as most laymen see it, from the outside; seen it as composed of preaching sermons, making calls, managing clubs and societies, and the like; but its inner life, its tides of pity and love, its secret consecrations, its wrestlings with self, —all these he had never experienced. He had seen the profession as a field for the exercise of his gift of fluency; and he had been lifted on a wave of success, at the outset, and had floated easily over reefs and shallows ever since. He had gained what he aimed at; namely, crowded houses and a well-filled treasury. What more could be expected of him by anybody? There was somebody, however, who evidently did expect something higher from him and was disappointed, rather, let us say, "scornful." And the irritated preacher glanced at his furniture and his walls, with a new kind of discontent. As Freeman had diagnosed him, he was indeed honest and sincere, in his main purpose of meeting the demands of the ministry in an adequate fashion, as he perceived those demands; but his range of perception, like that of many a pragmatic business man, while very clear and wise, had very strongly marked limits. There were sentiments and ideals and sensibilities, which he had never possessed, or had wholly lost.

Therefore, while he gasped under the spell of Mrs. Guthrie's fascinating scorn, for the reasons which had led to her outburst he groped in vain.

Suddenly he bethought himself of his predecessor, Mr. Freeman. He had visited Freeman once or twice, and there was general amity, though no very warm sympathy, between them. Carnaquay knew him, in part, but looked on him with a kind of condescending pity, as the world is apt to look on people who are too feeble to compete very vigorously in the struggle for existence. Freeman had never shown to him any of his inner life, his aims and his principles; and Carnaquay looked upon him as simply a man who had tried and failed to do the thing which he himself was easily doing; namely, to draw a large congregation each Sunday into Emmanuel Church, and replenish the exchequer of the society. But Carnaquay had heard, from time to time, various appreciative remarks about his predecessor, which, when uttered, had fallen into his heart like seed upon dry and barren ground. Now he recalled one or two of those expressions, — "spiritual," "fervent," "consecrated," and the like, — and he dimly perceived that they might imply the possession of some qualities which every clergyman ought to have, be his congregation large or small. So he resolved that he would see more of Freeman and find out, if possible, what secret of influence there was in the man.

The next day, while the memory of his repulse by the fair young widow was still fresh in his mind, he met Olive Marshall upon the street. He saw her in the distance, walking leisurely along, glancing in at the shop-windows as she passed. Her step was elastic and free, and the sight of her fresh, sunny face somehow gladdened his tired heart. As he drew nearer he noted her trim suit of plain, dark green cloth, contrasting agree-

ably with her blonde face and hair, and silently voted her a beautiful modern impersonation of Goethe's Marguerite. He was pleased to surprise her with a sudden greeting, for the round satin cheeks flushed so charmingly, and the rosy color surged up and submerged, as if in a carmine wave, the delicate violet veins on the white temples.

Her ingenuous eyes lifted themselves to his, and kindled with unaffected pleasure. "I am ever so glad to see you," she quickly responded, as he greeted her; and then she blushed again, as if regretting her too hasty words.

"And what did Miss Marshall see, in the windows, that she would like?" inquired Carnaquay, gently, and yet with a careless disregard of any and all answers. He let his eyes enjoy the face and figure before him, and merely talked because some talk seemed to be necessary.

Olive had the naturally frank, sunny temper of her father, but lacked the hard experiences of life which had given the mill-owner much worldly wisdom. Everybody had always smiled upon her, and smoothed her path, and condoned her misdemeanors, and she trusted and wished well to all people. But this, her general attitude of sweetness and trustfulness, received specialization and emphasis in the case of her minister; him she admired with that extravagant admiration which young maidens so often give to the man who openly voices the ideals which lie concealed in their timid hearts. She felt flattered to have "the Rev. Dr. Carnaquay" stop on the street, — when he was of course occupied with serious cares and solemn problems, — and actually give all his attention to her; a fractional part of his attention she was humbly thankful for, on Sundays, as she listened to his wonderful dis-

courses; but to be the sole object of his thought, for even a few moments, greatly pleased her, and for a moment confused her.

She quickly rallied, and was more charming than ever, as she sought to conceal her slight confusion by abruptly turning her gaze again toward the store window, whence the minister's greeting had withdrawn it. "See!" she exclaimed. "What a lovely copy of the 'Idylls of the King'! I was just admiring it."

"Ah—h?" assented Carnaquay, with a rising inflection, much preferring nature to art, at the moment, and smiling upon her charming youthful enthusiasm. He had never entirely read the "Idylls," himself, but he knew that they were fitting subjects for cultivated admiration. "Ah—h? And so Miss Marshall likes Tennyson?"

"Oh, yes!" responded the young girl, impulsively, pulling at her glove with nervous delight. "Oh, yes! I think he's — lovely."

She was at just the age when buoyant, impressionable maidenhood finds everything either "lovely" or "horrid." And Carnaquay was quietly confident as to which class she put him in. As he stood there beside her, he bethought himself to ask her assistance in the Sunday-school; and he at once proffered his request. The reply was spontaneous and eager, "Oh, yes, it would be 'lovely' to help in that work;" and the mobile face looked up at him radiantly, and then suddenly clouded. "But I really don't think — I — am competent."

Such a different response it was from the one he had recently received. And his heart warmed almost gratefully toward the fair young creature. Her unquestioning acceptance of his suggestion soothed his ruffled spirit; and he assured her that she was fully competent, and that he would be most happy to have her

assistance. Then, not readily finding any topic for further conversation, he said that he must needs hurry away to meet an important engagement, and — quite unnecessarily — again he took her daintily gloved hand, said good-by, raised his hat with what Mrs. Guthrie would have remorselessly called "a flourish," and was gone.

It was a brief interview, but such interviews often are like switches on life's railway; they seem insignificant in themselves, but they command widely diverging pathways, and may determine the fate of individuals or even of nations.

Ronald Carnaquay felt his spirits revived, as he went his way; the innocent, sensitive young girl had called out some of the best qualities in his complex nature; and he reflected, with satisfaction, upon her bright face and unspoiled spirit, and said to himself with conviction, that she had the making of a charming woman, and — probably — a devoted wife.

As for Olive, she found her nerves tingling with pleasurable excitement; and when she reached her home she went straightway to her room and took from a locked drawer in her writing-desk a letter and a faded rose. The letter was a brief note signed "Your friend and pastor, Ronald Carnaquay," casually written to her by him, expressing thanks for a pen-wiper which she had worked for him. The faded rose was one which the eloquent preacher had used in the pulpit, a few weeks before, to illustrate his great discourse on "Nature the Handiwork of God." The romantic young creature had crept up to the pulpit, after the service, and eagerly and stealthily borne away the flower.

Within the week, Carnaquay found an opportunity to carry out his plan of having a talk with Lawrence Freeman. There was an expression of disgust on his face and a feeling of perplexity in his breast, as he threaded

his way among the narrow, noisy streets of the North Side. However, he presently reached the house, climbed the dark stairway, and was fortunate in finding Freeman at home and alone.

A casual conversation was entered into, but it did not run on very smoothly, because there were actually few subjects which the men enjoyed in common; Carnaquay's methods of sermon preparation were of no interest to Freeman, for there was little literary or historical or homiletical merit in his pulpit productions. They took on their interest and power from his vigorous and vital manner; a few books of travel and a score of collections of anecdotes, together with his own objective observations of men and things — therein lay his complete resources. Moreover, his mind was given to such matters during but few hours in the week, because he had already gathered enough stories and reminiscences to carry him through two or three years of preaching; and that period of time was as long as the restless man cared to remain in any parish. His real interests were in business investments, the rise and fall of stocks, the industrial development of cities and countries, and the political news of the day.

His knowledge of men, on their practical side, was keen and quickly available; and, in the present situation, although he had little idea of Freeman's tastes and interests, he was shrewd enough to see that his host was holding himself aloof and was saying only such things as courtesy demanded. Therefore, he determined to draw him out. He resolved to ask questions and to bestow compliments. "How is your work at the chapel going?" he asked. "It must be interesting."

"It is, indeed," replied Freeman. And then, lest he should appear curt, he spoke of several matters which had come up, of late. He knew that his visitor took

little or no interest in such things, and asked about them only to please him. Still, one must be civil; and Freeman talked as pleasantly as he could about this work.

After a while, Carnaquay, moving about the room, noticed a small pile of books on Freeman's desk, and a manuscript evidently in process of writing. "What! Got your sermon started so soon? Why, it's only Tuesday. I never do much on mine until Friday."

Indeed, he did not, and usually not until Saturday. An hour or two of reviewing a previous sermon, that evening, and an hour the next morning before church, were sufficient to equip him with the decorative and martial armor of a seemingly new discourse, but one that was really old, and was merely scoured and retouched for that new occasion.

"That is not a sermon," remarked Freeman, referring to the manuscript. "I can't take undeserved credit for getting so far into my sermon, so early in the week. That is an address which I have been asked to give, before the Caledonian Club, next month, on Burns — his character and work."

"I'd like to hear some of it. Read me the first few pages, won't you? I gave an address on that same subject two years ago."

Carnaquay cared nothing about the address, but thought to please his host and thus thaw him out. He was prepared to lavish praise on the address, whatever it might be, and Freeman knew this and asked to be excused. "It's only my rough draft of the thing," he explained.

Carnaquay had an instinctive perception that when this low-voiced man said "no," he meant it. There was about Freeman an outward gentleness and quietness that contrasted strikingly with his visitor's dash and self-

confidence; but at times there were to be noticed a gleam in Freeman's eyes, and a metallic vibration in his voice, which were significant of inflexibility of will. Accordingly, Carnaquay changed ground a trifle. "I wonder, now," he said, lolling comfortably in his chair, "what you will do about the — the — rather shady and unsavory side of the Scottish poet's nature. You know he wasn't all 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' and 'Lines to a Mountain Daisy.'"

Lawrence's face grew even more serious than before. His visitor's suggestion struck a real response in his heart. He answered slowly and thoughtfully: "I have considered that part of the subject carefully. It is a difficult problem, but I have decided to refer briefly to what you call the 'shady' features of his character, and then to put my emphasis on the bright and lovable and commendable parts."

"Better leave it all alone!" remarked Carnaquay, speaking with conviction. "Those Scotsmen want praise heaped on their idol, without any suggestion of defects. That was the way I treated the subject; and I scored, too."

Lawrence's lip curled slightly. "I don't know that 'scoring' is the object of my giving the address. They have asked me to speak about his character and work." He drew his form up unconsciously. "And I shall do just that."

"I know, I know," said his visitor, deprecatingly. "But those hot-headed Scotsmen won't hear any adverse criticism of their idol, especially when they have taken aboard several glasses of claret or whiskey. Now you'd better be careful."

This was not exactly the side on which to approach Freeman, implacable advocate of truth that he was. Such advice, such counsel to expediency, only served to

confirm him in his determination. He started to say something about "one's duty," and "the literal truth," but checked himself. He felt that he might not be understood, and, above all things, he hated cant and *pose*.

Carnaquay resumed, placidly patting the arm of the chair and gazing idly out of the window. "It would be different if you were flatly asked your opinion about those unpleasant elements in Burns's character. Then you would have to give a plain answer; but in this case you need simply to let that side of the subject alone. Silence doesn't always give consent, by any means."

"No, not always; but it would, in this case," retorted Freeman, warmly. "They have really asked me, by inviting me to speak and by naming this subject, what my opinion is, regarding the poet's character; and although I have considerable Scottish blood in my veins, and much as I admire many of Burns's poems, I think he did some things which were cowardly and dishonorable; and I'm not going to give them my approval, by silence, on such an occasion as that dinner."

He spoke with such animation that Carnaquay swung around and looked at him, with newly awakened interest. He began to perceive an unsuspected fervor and vigor in the man; and he scanned him instinctively, out of the knowledge he had of his own histrionic tendencies, to determine how much of this vigorous language was due to a desire for dramatic effect. But the other's eyes and lips were convincing in their intensity of feeling; and Carnaquay had, aroused within him, a respect and admiration for this man which he had not anticipated. After a moment's silence, Lawrence, somewhat annoyed at himself for his warmth of speech, turned on his heel and went across to a chair, saying: "There! Let's not talk about it any more. Excuse me for my hot words!"

And he continued, lightly and pleasantly, "What have you been reading lately?"

A natural and conventional inquiry between clergymen, but, as Lawrence reflected before he had fully made it, a somewhat superfluous one when addressed to a man like Carnaquay, who was not likely to have seen half the books which were familiar to his host. The visitor retreated at once into his professional and oracular depths, and responded with dignity that he had not been able of late to find time, etc., etc.

Then he recollected that he was talking to one of the "cloth," a man who could not be hoodwinked by any such flimsy explanation, who knew well that a preacher must find time, or make it, to read considerably, under peril of running dry intellectually; one who knew, also, that in most cases the minister who neglects to read extensively does so from indolence or a waste of his time.

Therefore Carnaquay ended his stock apology of "a lack of time" rather abruptly; and suddenly changed the subject. "I wanted to ask you," he said, "if you could give me a copy of that prayer you made, at the funeral of that young house-painter; I have heard it spoken of with —"

He stopped in the midst of his sentence, seeing Freeman's face pale a trifle, and his under jaw grow rigid. Carnaquay had unwittingly touched a theme upon which his host was extremely sensitive. The subject of prayer was always dealt with very delicately by both Mr. and Mrs. Freeman; they both felt deeply its peculiar sanctity. And, free as the wife was, about criticising her husband's public work, it was tacitly understood between them that his spoken words of communion with the Most High, were never to be discussed.

Such delicacy of feeling as this was quite unknown to Carnaquay; and he could not explain his host's sud-

den change of manner. With a strong desire to lavish praise, as the safe resource in an emergency, he said: "I heard several people speak of that prayer in terms of admiration. They told — "

"Stop!" interjected Lawrence, in a stern whisper, and with an authoritative air, and raising his hand as if to forcibly silence the other's speech. To have this man, of all men, attempt to flatter him — about — prayer, — that was too much for him to bear. The commendation was as matter-of-fact as if given with regard to a crop of potatoes, or the cut of one's garments. He turned away his head a moment, then said, "Mrs. Freeman and I discuss most things about the clerical profession, but never mention the merits or demerits of a clergyman's prayers."

"Oh, excuse me!" exclaimed Carnaquay, frankly; "I didn't know you felt that way about prayer." And, getting no response except a sign of the head in assent, he said, as if to himself: "Now, I don't look at prayer in that way; I don't see why people should be long-faced about it. Why, I feel more like laughing than crying, when I pray. And the reason why I asked for a copy of that prayer of yours was because I wanted to study it a little. Perhaps you don't write out your prayers as I do. Some ministers do, and some don't. For my part, I think I get better results when I write them out and learn them by heart."

Lawrence's feelings were always intense, but were quick to yield to his sense of humor; and he felt a smile stealing over his face, as this man, admired pulpit orator that he was, talked about "getting better results" from written than from spontaneous prayers. He saw that it was the congregation, invariably, that Carnaquay held before his mind, preaching to them and praying to them, and, in most cases, chiefly concerned

in winning their approbation. There was, in the man, not the slightest conception of that mystical communion of the human soul with its God, which is the essence of all true prayer. "Each man (and each minister) must do as seemeth to him right," he quoted, pleasantly, and with no trace of feeling.

"Yes, of course," replied his visitor. "And I know that I do best when I write out and memorize my prayers."

"Very likely!" agreed Lawrence; and he added, as if to himself, softly and thoughtfully, "prayer is such a sacred act!"

"Yes, indeed!" echoed Carnaquay, regaining his normal professional tone. "And so many other acts of our lives are sacred, too. In fact," he remarked cheerfully, "I consider that all human life is sacred; don't you?"

Lawrence smiled, and replied, "Yes, in a certain sense." But he felt, in his secret heart, that his agreement with his visitor was merely in words; he knew that Carnaquay used the word "sacred" in a very general and superficial sense, and could speak it always in the same cheerful and shallow tone that he now used, never knowing by experience those hushed seclusions of the soul, where speech is wanting and symbols fail. He was sure, however, that Carnaquay meant exactly what he said; from Mrs. Guthrie, and others, and from the rather full reports of his sermons in the newspapers, he understood that the gospel which was now preached from Emmanuel pulpit was the wholesome but often inadequate and shallow one of "Good Nature." That was the underlying thought — so far as there was any — in Carnaquay's sermons. "Cheer people up! Make them laugh! Laughter aids digestion and health." All of which was true and useful, as far as it went.

Quite a natural line of counsel, also, from a prosperous individual like Ronald Carnaquay, whose income was comfortably large, and his success, in drawing crowds, almost phenomenal.

The pastor of Emmanuel Church went away, that day, with a change of heart toward his predecessor. Not that he had ever felt any antipathy to him; he had merely thought of him as dull, plodding, with no force or attractiveness. Now he perceived that there was much hidden power in the man; he had felt a suggestion of iron or steel, under his courteous and even concessive outward manner. And he somehow liked the very vehemence with which Freeman had turned upon him. In his own life everything went so comfortably, and everybody bent so readily to his will, that there was a tonic effect in the sharp, unyielding convictions of his friend; and he said to himself, several times, on the way home, "Freeman is a good fellow — a capital fellow. I must see more of him."

This admiration and friendliness on Carnaquay's part was increased, a fortnight later, when he learned — through the newspapers and through a man who was present — that at the dinner of the Caledonian Club Freeman did exactly what he had said he would do. The climax of the scene was somewhat stormy, Carnaquay's informant stated. Freeman was the chief speaker; and he gave, at the beginning of his address, words of warm praise to Burns's poetic works; then he referred to the kind and sympathetic nature of the poet himself. So far, the company — at this stage of the dinner somewhat exhilarated and excitable — were one with him; but, from speaking of the tenderness and generosity which grew out of the ploughman-poet's rich emotional nature, he passed to the self-indulgence and injustice and cruelty into which that same uncontrolled

nature led him. He spoke in a clear and steady voice, dealing with the faults of the great poet, not scornfully or even severely, but tenderly, regretfully.

At first the listeners could hardly credit their senses, as the speaker referred to the weaknesses and faults of their idolized countryman; then an ominous stillness crept over the hall, and one or two sipped nervously at their glasses. There was constraint visible on all faces. They had listened to an address, each year, on this same subject, during a succession of six or eight years, and never before had any speaker ventured to refer, even by a hint, to anything less than the highest and purest character in the man whom they had met to commemorate. To be sure, many of them never opened a volume of Burns's poems, year in and year out; but it was a self-evident maxim with all that "only good should be spoken of the dead." Therefore a feeling of uneasiness and rebellion arose in their hearts. Murmurs of dissatisfaction became audible. And through it, quite well aware of what he was doing, Freeman went on: "I yield to no man present," he said, speaking earnestly, yet in a low tone, "in my admiration for Robert Burns when truly himself, when interpreting the beauty of the world and voicing the highest longings of the human heart; but he was not always his highest self, not one of us is. And the Scottish blood in my veins chills with regret, as I recall those incidents of his life, those features of his character, which remind us — that 'to err is human,' and make us trust that 'to forgive is divine.'"

At this point several loud coughs were heard, and several glasses and knives were loudly clattered, and the president of the society partly arose from his seat. Those of the company, who were in a mental condition to discriminate with any justice, saw, and at least half

admired, the courage of the man, though they felt anger at his words. "I have been asked," continued Freeman, "to speak before this company, of the character and works of one whom I admire and love, in most of his acts, as known to us; but I would be untrue to my calling as a teacher of Christian morals, if I were to say of this great and deservedly beloved poet, even to say it or imply it by silence, that he was in all respects a model for the youth of our day. We must not admire him blindly, and we must never love him less. His was a sincere, impulsive nature, and I would not say one severer word of his weaknesses than he would say of them himself. The easy laudation which would gloss over his faults emanates from an undiscriminating mood, which cannot appreciate his stormy nature and his hardly-won conquests of himself. Therefore, let the wreath which we twine in his beloved memory be fashioned of laurel and bay, with here and there a leaf of cypress. Let his fame increase with the unrolling of the years, and let men be warned by the shadows that overhang his memory, yet be thrilled and uplifted by the radiance of his illumined genius, as he spoke what was given him to speak by the Almighty concerning the beauty and worth of lowly human life."

By the time that he had reached these closing words, the listeners had lost their tension of nerves, and had given him again a measure of their sympathy. They saw that he had gone as far as he had intended, had spoken after careful preparation and with great deliberation; they saw, too, that he really loved the man whom they loved, and they half suspected that he loved him more intelligently and with more real discrimination. So that when he began the familiar lines: —

> "Is there, for honesty poverty,
> That hangs his head, and a' that?"

giving them with fine expression of the dialect, there were nods of approval on all sides; Freeman loved the poem, and it came from his lips with such vitality and even passion, that the entire company sat spell-bound, and, as he finished, responded with loud cries of "Good! good!"

Then several of them, nearest, shook hands with him. The fact was, although they could not analyze their own feelings, that while his words had been honestly critical and judicial, they had not been bitter; and after them had come this outpouring of the wonderful poem, rendered so beautifully and so sincerely, that they felt the speaker to be one with them, in heartfelt admiration; and, discovering that, they forgot the words which had aroused their ire.

So it ended happily, though it seemed unlikely to at one point; and the members of the club felt an admiration, which they were not slow to express, for the fearless honesty of the minister and his fidelity to what he believed to be his duty.

CHAPTER XIV

WAYS AND MEANS

"What had the life of Jesus been to us, if we had only the words of his sermons, without the record of his going about doing good?" — MATTHEW SIMPSON.

THERE were many other incidents coming up, from time to time, in Lawrence Freeman's life, wherein the native worth of the man was revealed; and when once the men and women around him began to see in him the unostentatious virtues and the unpretentious power which were really there, they gave to him, with their admiration, an affection and trust which was deeply rooted and abiding. Ronald Carnaquay might be admired, but in a dazed and almost distrustful way; whereas Lawrence's friends, when once made, gave him entire and enduring confidence. Carnaquay, for example, was by no means a timid man, but he made a considerable show of such courage as he possessed. He took advanced ground in his theological views, and in his fellowship with other denominations, and in dealing with problems of custom and conduct; but he was likely to tell people what a courageous thing it was to thus step out beyond the beliefs and habits of the fathers. Whereas Lawrence Freeman, when convinced of the right of a course of conduct, or of the truthfulness of a new idea, quietly but firmly urged and maintained it; and only later did people see what courage had been involved in his course of action.

Carnaquay came over, from time to time, and visited the Freemans, in their rooms above the grocery store. He seemed almost a different man, when in company with Lawrence and his wife, from what he was with most other people; and the omniscient, dominating, pulpit manner was not in the least observable in him. Mrs. Freeman at first treated him rather coolly. Like most women, her feelings easily took the lead of her judgment, and she could not help looking upon him as, in a measure, a successful rival of her husband's. Not that she regretted their leaving Emmanuel Church; far from it. They were in every way happier now than they had been in that parish; still, while her reason thus acquitted Carnaquay of any wrong toward her husband, her heart was rebellious, especially at first, and she did not welcome him very cordially. His manner toward her was, however, warm and even punctiliously courteous. For example, he had a showy yet attractive way of pulling off the glove of his right hand, before shaking hands with her; he did this even laboriously; and, although Mrs. Freeman afterward laughed about it with her husband, she was a woman, and this attention and others made an impression upon her.

Carnaquay was evidently trying to get an insight into the hidden recesses of the profession which he had now stood for, during several years. He asked a great many questions of Freeman, and, as was learned later, he used some of Freeman's ideas in his sermons; which was proper enough, except that Lawrence smiled with amusement, and his wife smiled with scorn, when they agreed that the great pulpit orator probably put them forth with a might and grandeur far transcending anything of which Freeman himself was capable. "It is ability, however, Rebecca," asserted Lawrence, reprovingly, "genuine ability, to be capable of expressing so

effectively, by voice and gesture, a thought which on another's lips would not have weight. The full, strong expression of an idea is just as truly a mark of merit as is the thinking of the idea. Let us credit Carnaquay with all that he deserves."

"Perhaps so," assented his wife, with a satirical smile. "But it does irritate me to see him utter sonorous commonplaces, as if they were the winged words of the gods. You yourself, Lawrence, can say a thing with effect, if you really respect the worth of the idea; but you haven't learned yet to equal the unction of that old preacher who could bring tears to his listener's eyes by his tender pronunciation of the word 'Mesopotamia.'"

"No, I haven't," said Lawrence, with equanimity; "and I never expect to." Then he added, laughing: "I might practise on the multiplication table. I heard the other day of a great actress, Modjeska, I think, — at least some foreigner, — who, on being asked by a circle of American friends, at an evening party, to recite something in her own tongue, gave them a touching and pathetic recitation, which moved them almost to tears. When asked the name of the selection, she archly responded that it was a portion of the multiplication table. She had quietly amused herself, by means of her power of dramatic expression, at their expense. By the bye, haven't you noticed that our friend Carnaquay has referred to Browning, several times lately?"

"I have, indeed. And I meant to speak of it to you. Do you know, I have been putting two and two together, and I have concluded that he is considerably interested in Mrs. Guthrie."

"What? You don't mean it!" exclaimed Lawrence.

"Ah, but I do. Last week, when you were out, and he called, we talked a little about Browning; and I gathered that Mrs. Guthrie had advised him to read

that poet, and that he was making rather hard work of it."

"That does not signify."

"No, not taken alone. But you know that she has consented to teach a class in his Sunday-school; and that means a great deal, in Adeline Guthrie."

"But, my dear, you know that he is generally understood to be rather attentive to Miss Metcalf."

"Pshaw, Lawrence! You men rarely read those matters correctly. To be sure he sees a great deal of her, goes to her house, eats her dinners, smokes her cigars, stretches himself luxuriously in her big chairs, and purrs comfortably under her fulsome flattery; but he doesn't care a pin's worth for her; and he reads her like a book — not like Browning," she added mischievously, "but like one of his favorite volumes of Marryat. He sees through her smooth ways, and plays the game with her, pawn for pawn, castle for castle."

"You may be right, dear; you generally are, about such matters, only I don't quite see it."

"Well, another straw or two to show how the wind blows! I happen to know that he calls, with considerable frequency, at Mrs. Guthrie's; and he calls there, not in the broad daylight, as he does at Miss Metcalf's, but always in the evening."

"Oh, he talks over the Sunday-school lessons, I suppose," said Lawrence, laughing at her feminine interest and earnestness in this affair of the heart.

"Perhaps so. But I doubt it. And, again, he speaks openly and easily of his visits to Miss Metcalf, but he never mentions his visits to Mrs. Guthrie."

"How do you find out all these interesting facts?"

"Oh, never you mind!" responded Mrs. Freeman, triumphantly. "I have secret and reliable sources of information."

"Did Mrs. Guthrie tell you about the visits?"

"Just like a man!" exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, raising her eyebrows, with a show of superior wisdom. "Of course she didn't. If she had mentioned them, I wouldn't see so much significance in them; but, although I have given her several openings, she never refers to any such visits. Moreover, when I made a fling at Carnaquay the other day, just as a bait held out to her, she did not at once take up the challenge; she is quite too clever for that; but a minute or two later she told me about his kindness of heart, and said he was paying, himself, for the support of two aged aunts."

"I am not surprised at that. I long ago saw that the man's heart was sound. His deficiencies are in his moral and spiritual, or poetic nature. Still," added Lawrence, facetiously, "he can afford to take on another aunt or two, now that he has got that increase of salary."

"What increase? Why, I haven't heard about it!"

"I also have secret and reliable sources of information," repeated her husband, in a teasing tone. "No wireless telegraphy, though, like yours, marvellous and mysterious. My source of information was Mr. Marshall. The increase isn't generally known yet."

Of course there was no ignoring his wife's importunity, even if he had wished to ignore it; and Lawrence related substantially what Mr. Marshall had told him about the increase in salary.

It seems that Carnaquay had received a "call" to another church, in a neighboring city. This "call" named a salary five hundred dollars larger than the amount he was receiving from Emmanuel Church. Carnaquay had, of course, courted this invitation. He had preached in the vacant pulpit, had given non-committal

responses to inquiries made of him by the trustees of that church, and in every way had sought to be formally called. But the church was not at all suited to his tastes and talents, and he had no idea of accepting the invitation if he got it. It was a church of the "institutional" kind. It was situated in a community which offered no congenial surroundings for a man like Carnaquay, and it labored under a debt of twenty thousand dollars.

However, the formal "call" had come, and Carnaquay opened the letter and read it, with the same kind of satisfaction which a whist-player feels, as he holds in his hands a trump card of high value.

The proper way for him to have proceeded was to call together his trustees and consult them; but that kind of proceeding would have been too tame for a man of his nature. Therefore, he spoke to nobody about the matter, waited until the next Sunday, then, at the close of the service, read the document with great deliberation, and closed the service immediately. This was the way in which to get the full dramatic value of the situation; and Carnaquay's ambitious, power-loving nature was agreeably stimulated, as crowds of people flocked about him and poured praises and entreaties into his eager ears. Through it all he preserved a sphinx-like reticence as to his purpose, occasionally murmuring something about being "led by the Lord," and "opportunities for larger service."

A week passed — a very agreeable week for the pastor of Emmanuel Church. He enjoyed his position, his "desirability," much as a belle enjoys coquetting with ardent lovers. Everybody whom he met, at once broached the subject of the "call." And he, preserving a calm and deliberate mien, set forth the attractions of the distant beckoning church. This atti-

tude of his gave rise to the belief and deepened the fear that he would leave Emmanuel Church; and there was much unrest and anxiety — all of which was extremely agreeable to Carnaquay, always a clever tactician. But, during such periods of suspense and uncertainty, there is a "time and tide" in the affairs of men. Ronald Carnaquay knew well that he must not delay too long in his "prayerful consideration"; the public's interest would bear only a certain amount of strain. So, a few days later, he signified to the trustees of Emmanuel Church that he was ready to confer with them; and the meeting was held at Dr. Mixer's house.

As Lawrence Freeman recounted the interview to his wife, interpreting Mr. Marshall's report as only a minister could do it, husband and wife broke out into laughter, at various occurrences. Carnaquay had evidently made one of his solemn speeches about the "exhausting character of his labors" and the "exacting demands" of his pulpit efforts.

It was a theme which that fluent individual never dwelt upon, in the Freeman household, for he was well aware that the Freemans knew his intense enjoyment of public speech; but it often was amplified elsewhere, with good effect, as at this meeting of the trustees; and poor Mr. Pidge's ridge of encircling red locks stood up in a fringe of fiery anxiety, lest the pastor should really go, and he, the treasurer, fall from his elevation of ease and glory, as custodian of a full exchequer. Some of the trustees shared their alarmed treasurer's anxiety, and showed it with foolish frankness. But men like Dr. Mixer and Blaney, and even Mr. Marshall (who was getting his astute minister's measurements with greater and greater accuracy) — these men strongly suspected the real bent of their reverend

leader's plans. In fact Blaney had succinctly expressed his opinion to Dr. Mixer that the whole thing was a "bold bluff." This opinion was shared by the stout apothecary, although he usually had sounder reasons for his opinions than did his nervous, irascible henchman.

After Carnaquay's impressive exordium, the talk took on that general and desultory and yet watchful character, which always comes over a meeting between two men, or two groups of men, who are intent upon outwitting each other. The minister, however, was composed and even indifferent in his manner. He was waiting for the question (which came in due time) from Dr. Mixer, "Would you be able to remain with us if we advanced your salary — well, three hundred dollars?"

Then Carnaquay, with a steadiness and self-possession which never could be equalled by a "born minister," sympathetic and sensitive, intimated that if — *if* he remained, it could be only with a salary fully equivalent to the amount now offered by the "beckoning church."

At this point in the interview occurred the diversion which Freeman and his wife would have much liked to see. Blaney, convinced that Carnaquay was ready to remain at the increased salary, was quick to feel the restored equilibrium of the situation, and regained his proper official superiority with a leap. And he proceeded to hint that the church was conferring a considerable favor on its minister, by thus straining every nerve to increase his salary.

Carnaquay took this remark suavely. In his heart he despised the petty, vindictive, little trustee, and Blaney had a dim suspicion of this feeling.

"More than that," continued Blaney, who always increased in courage as opposition weakened and danger

faded, "it is said throughout the parish that the pastor's visits are becoming more and more like those classic visits of the angels, which we have all heard about; and with this increase in 'pay'" (Blaney always had as keen a scent for a harsh word as does a buzzard for carrion), "we shall expect a change in this particular."

Up to this point Carnaquay had given no distinct sign of mental disquietude; at least not to the strabismic perception of the man who was speaking; others of the company, more accustomed than the glib Blaney to intricate commercial negotiations, thought they detected evidence of controlled anger in the clergyman. And when Blaney started again, on some even more snarling generalization, about the desirability of clergymen being above mercenary aims, they were not wholly surprised, though partly anxious and partly gratified, to see Carnaquay slowly lift his gaze from the floor, where it had been fixed, and level his dark eyes at Blaney, in a threatening way. He next arose, with marked deliberation, and interrupted the man with a tone and gesture of command, which made jackal-like Blaney subside into silence.

"My dear sir," began Carnaquay, in his blandest and most formal speech, yet giving his opponent an icy look which chilled him to the marrow, — "my dear sir, permit me to express to you, in the presence of these *gentlemen*, my clear conviction that you are transgressing the bounds of decorum and decency. The restrictions of my profession prevent me from expressing my contempt for you as I would like." He slowly raised his long arm and pointed his finger at the now trembling Blaney. "I therefore say to you that one of two things must be done. Either you present me a written apology, through this board of gentlemen, or I accept the call which has recently been extended to me."

Carnaquay stood quite still, nearly a half minute after he had uttered this withering speech, and seemed to transfix, with eye and finger, the utterly discomfited and demoralized little man. He was Blaney's superior, physically and mentally, and even morally in some ways; and his utter loathing for the vermin-like nature of the man before him was written in every feature of his strong, determined, handsome face.

The silence was absolute. Then Carnaquay turned to the others, and, in the quietest of voices, said: "I regret, gentlemen, to have been obliged to express myself so plainly, but I hold to the terms which I have named. I wish you all a very good evening." And he went out, master of the situation, knowing that his power and position had warranted his safe outburst, and confident that the apology and the salary would both reach him, in the regular course of events. And he was quite correct in his judgment.

CHAPTER XV

"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE"

"Men exist for the sake of one another. Teach them, then, or bear with them."—MARCUS AURELIUS.

MR. AND MRS. FREEMAN were walking home from the chapel. It was Sunday evening, and the clergyman was tired, after the day's duties; and his wife, who always followed every thought and movement of his public life with sympathy and even with anxiety, was almost as tired as was he. Lawrence's face showed alternating feelings; his brow at one moment became clouded, and straightway the corners of his mouth began to curl upward, as if some amusing idea were struggling against a general mood of depression.

His wife noted his absent manner, and inquired concerning it. "What is the line of your reflections, Lawrence? It can't be next Sunday's sermon."

"No," responded her husband, slowly; "I wasn't thinking about next Sunday, I was thinking about this Sunday. Did you notice how badly those boys in the Sunday-school choir behaved?"

"Indeed, I did," said Mrs. Freeman. "At one moment I wanted to shake some of them, and at the next moment I had hard work to keep from laughing outright."

"The little rascals!" exclaimed Freeman, with a broad smile on his face. "Uncle Ben can't cope with them;

that is evident. Something must be done, in the way of change. I feared, when he asked permission to gather and train them, that they would prove too much for him."

"The old man seems fond of them, though," said Mrs. Freeman; "he treats them as if they were his own children. He won't relish the idea of giving them up. Do you think he has any suspicion that the plan is not an entire success?"

"That I can't say. But we certainly must not allow such lawlessness as they indulge in. Uncle Ben never can control them. I might as well accept that fact. But how to approach him on the matter! I hardly know how he will take it. He is so devoted to the chapel, and especially to the Sunday-school, that I really don't know what course to pursue."

"You might write him a letter about it."

"Yes, I could do that. In such a case a letter is easier to manage than a direct talk. But with Uncle Ben I feel reluctant to do that. He is so absolutely straightforward, himself, that I feel unwilling to use any indirect method." And after a moment's reflection Freeman added: "I think I will adopt the simplest plan, and speak to him. I do hate greatly to hurt the poor old soul's feelings."

The next morning, being Monday, was largely given up by Freeman, as by most busy ministers, to all kinds of little duties — odds and ends of the week's work; and among these fragmentary tasks was the visit to Uncle Ben. He found the old man clearing away the remains of his breakfast; the cats were finishing their morning meal, and one of them was licking clean a plate, evidently Uncle Ben's, where he had left it on the carpenter's bench which served as a table. "Ain't he a beauty?" said the old man, admiringly, to Mr.

Freeman, and nodding his head toward the handsome tortoise-shell creature.

Uncle Ben's sleeves were rolled up, and his hands were plunged into a pan of dish-water. "That's the one ez likes music best," he continued. "Wait now, I'll show ye!" And he withdrew his hands, dried them hastily on a mass of rags, and picked up his violin. He started on the lively "Invitation to the Waltz," by Weber; and, at the first sound, the cat sat back from the now emptied plate, and licked her chops. Next she gave an expansive and comfortable gape. Then, climbing down to the floor, in the sinewy and dainty fashion of the feline species, she came over and rubbed contentedly against her master's leg.

Pride and affection beamed on Uncle Ben's round, red face. "Tell yer what 'tis," he remarked, stopping the music, "them 'ar cats is cur'ous creeturs. They know een a most'z much'z a human. Why, you kin allus tell which way the storm is, by the way them cats p'int their tails when they're a-washin' up."

Uncle Ben, with fiddle in one hand and bow in the other, dilated on the surpassing value of his pets as weather indicators. Lawrence agreed amiably, with nods and smiles. He always saw the picturesque element in the unique old figure, and felt the simple sincerity of the nature beneath it. And when Uncle Ben triumphantly extended his arm and fiddle in the direction of the black cat, now washing his face, with tail pointing westward, the kind-hearted minister resisted the temptation to point out the tiger-gray cat by the stove, who was also performing his ablutions, but with caudal appendage pointing due northeast.

Lawrence was trying to find some good opening for his distasteful errand, but the conversation went on, for several minutes, and no opportunity offered. Perhaps

he would best take up the matter abruptly. A less sympathetic person would have made easy work of it; Ronald Carnaquay, for instance, would have laughed and joked, and in an offhand way made clear his wishes to the old man, and very likely would not have caused him much pain; at least, if he had opened a wound, he would have soothed and healed it with the salve of his bluff good nature and rough sympathy.

But that was not a way possible for a man like Lawrence Freeman, who had a feminine delicacy of feeling. Lawrence followed, responsively, Uncle Ben's lethargic monologue. The old man's unfailing sweetness was a living epistle to him, anxious and even irritable as he sometimes was tempted to become. "Naow you jest see them beauties!" said Uncle Ben, leaning over from the rough box which was his pantry, and holding out some objects toward his visitor. Two small, salted, mackerel they were, and a potato. "Ain't they lovely?" continued he, and his big, round, red face showed a genuine delight. "Bill Dawkins giv' 'um ter me this mornin'; thet comes er gittin' up airly. I dew so love a nice mack'rel, cooked jest right, an' a nice mealy pertater with it, an' some salt an' a leetle mite er milk — all mixed up tergether."

The old man had a way of enumerating the virtues of his comestibles, which was of itself appetizing. He smacked his lips, and looked as tenderly at the two lone victims of hook and salt, and the not gigantic potato, as though he had been a gastronomic connoisseur seated at Bignon's table in Paris.

Freeman's heart gave a little bound of tenderness and pity, as he looked and listened. This impoverished, infirm old man, happy and artless as a child, content and even enthusiastic over his extremely scanty fare — it was a touching and suggestive sight; and the clergyman saw

with new force the truthfulness of one of his oft-repeated "points" in preaching, that physical objects and external acquisitions are only the *occasions* of happiness, whereas the inner capacity is the real *cause* of it. He was on the edge of suggesting that butter was also good on a baked potato, but he restrained his tongue. Butter was not on the list of Uncle Ben's daily diet; it was a luxury; and when it came, he enjoyed it, and when it was lacking, he enjoyed the salt and the rather thin milk.

At this point Lawrence saw a chance to broach the subject which weighed on his mind. "I think eels are pretty good to eat," said he, putting as much gastronomic interest into his voice as he could. "Do you ever get hold of any of them, Uncle Ben?"

Then the old man entered upon a long dissertation on the subject of eels — their nature, habits, and their value as food. When he had brought his remarks to a close, Lawrence added a word of agreement and then went on: "Yes, eels are queer, squirming creatures. Sometimes when I see those boys in the Sunday-school choir, restless and active and mischievous, they remind me of a basket of eels. It's their nature to be so, I suppose. I think, though, that they cause you no end of trouble, Uncle Ben, and I sometimes wish you hadn't the care of them."

"They hain't much trouble, Mr. Freeman. They're awful good boys, all on 'em."

"They're not really bad boys, I know," responded the minister, pushing steadily on in his purpose, "but they are very hard to handle; and I've thought, of late, that perhaps I ought not to let you wear yourself out with them."

The old man stopped in his work, as he always did when he wished to talk, and said, "Naow, do you know, I love them boys, an' I keep thinkin' they are a gwine

ter dew better. They really mean ter, only they forgit."

"Yes, I know. We can't expect them to remember, very long, and they have such animal spirits to control, that I don't wonder they often break out into mischief."

Uncle Ben did not reply, and Lawrence went on with reluctance, yet with determination. "I was speaking with my wife about it yesterday, and I told her that I thought we ought to relieve you of the burden, especially as we need you so much, with your violin, for the general singing of the school."

Uncle Ben again stopped his work, and stood looking steadily and reflectively at his visitor. What he was thinking, Lawrence could not quite determine. The dull old face was never an expressive one, and the emotions behind it never burned fiercely, but always with a subdued and gentle glow. He took off his spectacles, and wiped them ineffectively on a piece of newspaper. "I mus' say, Mr. Freeman, ez them boys does try my soul sometimes, an' 'lthough I've prayed fer grace, I don't seem to git 'nuff ter keep me; and I vaow, I dew almost git mad with 'um sometimes, 'specially yisterday when they hid my fiddle-bow under the cushions. But there," he added, apologetically, "I wuz ashamed to git riled about sech a leetle thing. Why, Mr. Freeman, what is a fiddle-bow, viewed in the light of eternity?"

"You dear old saint!" exclaimed Lawrence, impulsively, rising to his feet. Then he said more quietly, but with conviction, "Well, Uncle Ben, you shall not go on being fretted, Sunday after Sunday, with their capers. I will not allow it. We need you for other things. I shall attend to the matter. And now I must be going."

As he shook hands with the old man, Uncle Ben cleared his throat, in a preparatory way, and began:

"Hold on jest a minute or two, Mr. Freeman! I wanted to ask a favor of yer. I — I — er want — ter make my will."

Lawrence hoped that he did not show in his face the utter surprise which he felt in his heart. "A will! Of what significance would be a will, in the disposal of such slender possessions?" But Uncle Ben went slowly on: "'Tain't much I've got, but these 'ere things er mine, when I'm through with 'em, I don't want strangers to knock 'em round. I want *you* to hev 'em." And he laid his other hand (both hands wet from his dish washing) affectionately on Freeman's hand.

Lawrence was taken wholly by surprise, and was deeply moved with the pathos of the situation. His mind rapidly took an inventory of the poor old man's effects — a chair or two, a few pots and kettles, one or two ugly chromo pictures, and a half dozen dilapidated books. Not much more. But the old man's all. And to be given away by a will! And the cats also! the cats! At least four in number. Were they to be included in the legacy?

The mingled humor and pathos were almost more than Lawrence could meet, with a calm face; but he saw how earnest his old friend was, and he received his words sympathetically. "I respect your wish," he said, "and I feel honored by your confidence. Now, if you really hold to your purpose — "

He paused interrogatively, and Uncle Ben nodded his head, "Then you might see somebody, and have a will drawn up; some lawyer, probably."

A slight shadow spread over the old man's face, at the mention of lawyers. "I don't like 'em, them lawyers," he said distrustfully.

Lawrence smiled. He knew the prejudices of such a person. "Well, I think you might go to my friend,

Mr. Marshall, Mr. Thomas Marshall; you know him. He has had experience in such matters. You can trust him."

"Yes, I reckin I kin," assented Uncle Ben. "I was a tellin' Mis' Snow — "

He suddenly dropped his visitor's hand. "I snum!" he exclaimed with clumsy haste. "Ef I didn't tell Mis' Snow I'd come over to see her this forenoon! An' I clean forgot it."

Whereupon he began, with a ludicrous effort at haste, his preparations to go out. This sense of obligation was so strong that he forgot his visitor, for several moments; and Freeman, silently and with amusement and yet pity, stood observing his awkward haste.

"Well, good-by, Uncle Ben," he said, at length; "I must be going. I have an engagement myself."

"All right, Mr. Freeman," responded Uncle Ben, busily putting away his dishes, and not even turning his head. "Come in again soon! I love ter hev ye." And there was no mistaking his honest plainness of speech, despite his entire neglect of conventional courtesies.

So Lawrence, smiling, as he walked along the streets, at the novelty of the scene which he had just shared, went back to his rooms; he was eager to describe the situation to his wife. It was one of his most natural sources of pleasure, this of recounting to her his daily doings; and he knew how kindly she felt toward the simple old man, and how eager she would be to hear the result of his errand.

Thus, occupied with thoughts half amusing and half pitying, he reached home, and as he entered what he and his wife called their "office," — dining room, study, and reception room combined, — his train of reflections was disturbed by finding Mrs. Freeman entertaining a

visitor; and that visitor was the always welcome Mrs. Guthrie.

Greetings and commonplaces were interchanged, and then that sort of pause ensued, which usually comes where two people, in somewhat confidential intercourse, are invaded by a third; the conversation became forced and discursive. Mrs. Freeman, always a little reticent, seemed more reticent than usual. The fair young widow, whose fresh, rosy face and large dark eyes daringly defied her mourning garb, seemed making a distinct effort to be interesting.

Freeman was too sensitive to "atmosphere" to be unmindful of these things; and soon arose, saying that he must be going to the chapel, to overlook some carpenter-work in one of the class rooms. But Mrs. Guthrie, quite as quick as he in all social matters, herself arose, took a hasty but affectionate leave of both her friends, and slipped out of the room with her usual ease and grace.

So soon as the two were alone, Lawrence said: "I see that I intruded. I am sorry that I came back quite so soon." Then he went about some work, leaving to his wife, if she chose, to explain her interview with Mrs. Guthrie. This was the unwritten law of their happy relationship; intimate and confidential as that relationship was, they never tore down reserves between themselves, but each left to the other the autonomy of his own circle of personality. But now, as in most cases, silence was broken voluntarily, and Mrs. Freeman said: "There wasn't so much conspiracy as you might suppose, Lawrence. Adeline ran over to invite me to an afternoon tea, and just as you came in we had spoken of Ronald Carnaquay."

She paused, to peer into the work-basket before her, and her husband smiled, and inquired casually, as he

turned the pages of a concordance: "Well, how does the 'Great and Only' get on? Still electrifying, I suppose."

"Very likely," assented Mrs. Freeman, "although we did not speak about his public life. Adeline told me that she had consented to teach a class in Emmanuel Sunday-school. She says that she has more leisure than she knows what to do with, and I rather encouraged her in her purpose. The simple fact is that she is young and very active, and I can't think she is interested especially in Ronald Carnaquay. She spoke of him once as noisy and vulgar, yet her voice did not have quite the scornful edge that I have often noted in it. I think that she is a trifle flattered by the compliment he pays her in thus urging her to teach; you know he has no lack of teachers."

"They are all maidens or widows, I am told," suggested her husband, with fun lurking in his deep-set eyes. "That is the joyous fate of bachelor ministers." Then he added with an afterthought, "Isn't Olive Marshall teaching in the school now?"

Mrs. Freeman nodded assent. "Yes, Mrs. Marshall objected, somewhat, but Olive had her way in the end. She is a dear, sweet girl. I wonder — I — have you heard anybody speak of Ronald Carnaquay's showing a somewhat marked interest in her?"

Lawrence paused, and gave serious attention to his wife's words. "No," he at length replied, "I have heard nothing of the sort. Why, Carnaquay is old enough to —"

"No, no!" interrupted Mrs. Freeman, with her under lip curling significantly. "Nobody is too old or too young for anything, in affairs of the heart. Carnaquay is not far from thirty-five, and Olive is seventeen. She seems younger, though, for her mother and father have

wisely kept her a simple girl, as long as possible, not letting her become an affected 'young lady,' at a premature age."

"But I can't believe," said Freeman, "that there is any likelihood of —"

"No, perhaps not; but that was precisely what Mrs. Guthrie was talking about, when you came in so suddenly. She told me that in her judgment the young girl was infatuated with Carnaquay. She has seen them together often, and the child shows plain signs of her great delight in his society."

There was silence between them, for a few moments; each had suspended work. Then Freeman said, reflectively: "I can't think that anything will come of it; still, stranger things have happened; and then, too, Olive is a woman grown. We call her a 'child,' but she is as old as many young women have been on their wedding-day."

"But she is so unformed," suggested Mrs. Freeman, resuming her work. "She has no more worldly wisdom than have most young people of fifteen."

"Very likely," responded her husband. "But that very quality of ingenuous simplicity would be, by psychological laws, the very thing which would be attractive to a shrewd, distrustful nature like Carnaquay's. But there! I don't credit the gossip in the least. For my part, I would more incline to suspect some growing interest between Carnaquay and Adeline Guthrie."

At this point, the somewhat absent-minded clergyman recollected that he ought to be at the chapel, to overlook repairs; and, taking up his hat, he set off at once.

CHAPTER XVI

COEDUCATION

"God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her."
— ROBERT BROWNING.

IT was quite natural that the minister and his wife should be interested in whatever concerned Ronald Carnaquay and Emmanuel Church; and their interest became doubled when the future of their dear young friend, Olive Marshall, was under discussion. But acute as their surmises were, they were made in the dark; and it is permitted the reader of a transcript of human life, like the present one, to know more about the interaction of the forces involved, than does any one personage in the drama.

I may say at once that Ronald Carnaquay was indeed considerably drawn to Olive Marshall. In part, he was interested in her evident interest in him, so frankly and even blushingly expressed. He was not unaware of the nervous tension in the sylph-like young maiden, which his presence aroused. He had noted, often, the heightened color in her cheek, and the brightening of the soft blue eyes, as she became aware of his presence. He was even not above adding fuel to this romantic passion — a few fagots in the form of tender glances, and a gentle pressure of the hand, and a marked caress of the voice as he addressed her. So far as he was concerned, he simply enjoyed, sensuously, the agree-

able emotions which her fresh, youthful face and figure aroused in him. Beyond that, he at times mildly spun fancies, and even calmly wondered (so strong was the mercantile instinct within him) how much the mill-owner's wealth would net, if his affairs were all settled up.

There was, however, another force in the field, which somewhat complicated the situation. This was Mrs. Guthrie's conscious resolution — framed after considerable silent debate — to see more of her minister and to try to develop him into a higher type of man. "Even if he must become less a minister," she added to herself, grimly, "in order to become more a man."

Therefore she had sent the note of acceptance which she had temporarily placed in her desk, and she had taken up Sunday-school work in Emmanuel Church. This brought her in contact, repeatedly, with Carnaquay, and, although his conceit and vulgarity amazed her, she was really pleased by his manifest consideration for her opinions and her society. Moreover, she was cognizant of Carnaquay's attitude toward Olive Marshall, and, like an athlete, she enjoyed putting forth her clever resources, to try to counteract the attractiveness of Olive's physical charms.

Thus it came about — and Ronald Carnaquay seized every advantage which the fair young widow cautiously conceded — that the two were much together, alone; and although the object of the various interviews was always conspicuously kept in view, by the artful clergyman, Adeline noted, with amused interest, that he was very willing to talk on any subject whatsoever.

What she really aimed at doing was this, stated concretely: She was resolved that he should dress in better taste, out of the pulpit and especially in it; and that he should soften down his glaring extremes of manner;

also that he should read more and think more on subjects suited to his profession; and especially was she tenaciously bent on toning down his inordinate conceit of his own abilities.

She secretly called him her "savage"; and she was confident of educating him into higher standards of taste and propriety.

Carnaquay had seen an average number of women, in his life, and fancied that he knew them and how to get along with them, about as well as he knew men; but, as Adeline Guthrie quickly perceived, he had thus far seen little of really cultivated women. He had often met men of cultivation, but such men learn to waive their own finer preferences in speech and manner and standards of taste, when dealing with other men, in business ways; and they more readily adopt the tone and language of the street and shop, than do the women with whom they associate in their homes.

Carnaquay's one redeeming virtue, socially, as she studied him, was his capacity to recognize the nicer standards of refined womanhood, when he came into their presence. Often her instruction of her apt pupil was conveyed by a slight raising of the eyebrows or an abrupt silence, which made the shrewd man reconsider some raw opinion he had expressed, or some rough act which he had committed. Thus, with considerable rapidity, he modified his free and almost swaggering manner, and recast some of his habitual forms of expression. The delicate influence of Mrs. Guthrie's mind and taste was soon apparent in the clergyman's choice of neckties and collars, in his freedom from the fumes of tobacco-smoke (which formerly permeated his clothing), and in many other matters of minor morals.

It was a surprising change in Carnaquay, — this in his personal dress, especially, for he had always given

much attention to such matters, and had flattered himself that he dressed in the most approved and latest fashion. He had done so, indeed, but he had always gone to that extreme in each fashion which makes "loudness." Now, with some slight twinges of chagrin, he followed her wishes, open or implied, and his clever young teacher noted, with a smile of satisfaction on her red, curving lips, his rapid improvement.

There were many sides to Adeline Guthrie's nature, — as indeed is true of most people, —and she could show an unfeigned interest in many fields of thought; but perhaps as agreeable to her as any themes of conversation were literary and artistic subjects. And she now took pleasure in reading and discussing with her friend and pupil the works of the great poets and essayists, and those of contemporary writers of fiction. She soon saw that while Carnaquay, if left to himself, would not open a book like "The Autocrat," or "Sartor Resartus," or "Society and Solitude," yet, with another person to lead, he grasped the best in such books, with evident pleasure. And he, too, soon made the discovery that although she gave, most abundantly, intellectual sympathy, she promptly drew back at any demand upon her for a more emotional sympathy. She was ready to talk on any theme whatever, which he might suggest, — sociological, æsthetic, or historical, — but if he attempted to push toward any more intimate expression of the romantic sentiments, a chill silence fell on his listener, and he quickly found, like Orpheus ascending from the lower world, that his Eurydice had slipped away behind him, and for the nonce at least was lost to him.

Carnaquay was not of the kind of men who fall blindly and unconsciously in love. He studied himself, yes, and he knew himself, rather accurately; and he recognized the possibilities of this growing acquaintanceship with

the charming young widow. He studied himself, and doubly he studied her. He knew, for instance, perfectly well that, although she was bent on reshaping his ideas about his personal appearance, she was somewhat lax about her own; but the dark, wavy hair above her frank, luminous eyes, — although those rebelling locks were evidently rarely subjected to treatment, and were seemingly shaken into shape by a hasty toss of the head, and never knew any harsher touch than that of their owner's slender fingers—those mischievous locks seemed to dance defiantly and to curl in derision, at his cautious advance.

Thus matters went on, between the two. On the clergyman's part, he said to himself that he had never found a person with whom he so much enjoyed talking; but he confessed ruefully, at times, that the intellectual strain was a severe one for him. And once or twice, after he had been mercilessly snubbed by his young friend, or had been talked to with a maternal severity, because of his excessive "self-interest," as Adeline stated it to him personally, he had gone away, discomposed and angry, and had accepted the standing invitation of Miss Metcalf to dine with her. At the great baronial mansion of the Metcalfs there was freedom for him, yes, and many agreeable, soothing words. The snowy-turreted spinster "adored the smell of tobacco," and always expressed her deep joy in recalling his latest sermon. He could not help reflecting at such times, in this well-furnished mansion, how comfortable and luxurious life might be continuously made for a man, by its skilful and agreeable owner.

Yet on such reveries the picture of that other snug little sitting room would intrude, with its better equipment in books, its higher tastes in pictures, and its piquant, bright-eyed occupant, now listening with eager

face to his opinion of Kipling, or William Watson, or quirking her well-poised head on one side, as she disputed some point of his belief about Lowell or Whittier.

This was essentially the condition into which affairs had come, at the time when Lawrence had unwittingly intruded on the conference between his wife and Mrs. Guthrie.

Although the young widow rebelled at the thought, she knew that not on intellectual levels did she come closest to Ronald Carnaquay, but in the emotional realm of music. He was interested, indeed, when they read and talked about abstract themes of history or literature; and in the study of German, which they tried together, he was apt enough; but, when at times her own almost inexhaustible zeal in these studies flagged a trifle, she became painfully suspicious that she was leading and he was following. On her rested the burden of the work. He had ideas, yes, but he had not a self-feeding fount of interest, in his own heart; and many a time, as consciousness of what was the real goal of his attention and effort came upon her, a wave of color swept over her face, and she bit her lips with vexation.

Now in musical matters there was a marked difference. She could not deny the fact, subversive as it was, of her cherished plan of educating and reforming the reverend gentleman intellectually. Not that he had any particular skill in playing or singing; he had not, and, for a time after their acquaintance was established, she had not realized how much music meant to him. He had a baritone voice, however, of fair quality, rather powerful, and he had a correct musical ear. This she was quick to detect, when he had yielded to her suggestion one day to sing "Robin Adair." She saw at once that he was wholly untrained; she noted, too, that he rated his natural musical talent low, which was

a remarkable thing in him. Under a little encouragement he unfolded rapidly, and much enjoyed singing, and even more enjoyed hearing her sing. She had a good degree of musical technique, but sang in a simple, unaffected way, which often deceived listeners, who were themselves untrained and expected more elaboration in cultivated singers.

In this realm of music these two people often came quickly and dangerously near together; so Adeline Guthrie perceived, and was constantly on her guard. She never felt so sure of Ronald Carnaquay's real sincere self, however, as when he and she had enjoyed an hour of music together.

On one rainy, misty, autumn afternoon, in particular, there almost occurred a *dénouement* which, had it really culminated as it threatened, would have seriously affected several events and persons in this narrative.

On this particular afternoon, dreary, dripping, desolate, Adeline sat at the window in a huge arm-chair, with a copy of "Anna Karenina" in her lap, and her eyes gazing idly and forlornly out over the fields and intervening street. There was a despondency about nature that afternoon which permeated her own thought and feeling. Little pearls of raindrops pattered from the eaves, and tiny necklaces of drops stretched along the branches and twigs of the elm trees. Smoke from a kitchen chimney, opposite, sank heavily almost to the ground, and there hovered in aimless uncertainty. The flag on the schoolhouse upon the hill clung disconsolately to its staff; a few wet, miserable sparrows shrank under cover of the masses of ivy on the house across the street, and chattered and scolded so loudly that they could be heard even with the window closed.

The young woman who stared absently through the

window saw none of these objects or actions; but the general temper and tone of the damp, depressing day laid hold upon her spirits, which, as a rule, were more than ordinarily buoyant. Her interest in life was temporarily at low ebb. She recalled her past, as one so often does, in a mood of despondency, and lived over again her earlier years. She often had boasted to herself of her independence and had declared that she never felt lonely; but to-day, as her soft, round chin sank into the hollow of her hand, and she leaned heavily upon the arm of her chair, she presented a really forlorn appearance. She hardly knew the name of the emotion which at times rose in her heart, as water rises in a well fed by remote, unseen sources. It was, in truth, the longing of a maiden heart, although the world knew her as a widow. She had never felt the fire of passionate love sweep through her soul, burning up all that was trivial and base, and purifying all that was really true and eternal. Her affection for her aged guardian and former husband had been more an emotion of gratitude or duty than of human sentiment and passion. For a certain time, after the late Dr. Guthrie's death, she thought of herself as a woman who had passed through the stages of maidenly courtship, wifely sympathy, and widowed desolation; but gradually, as she matured and learned to study the people about her, she perceived more and more clearly that many of them — as, for instance, the Freemans — concealed beneath a partially prosaic exterior intenser mutual sympathies and passions than she herself had ever known. She seemed to see an unknown, untried country, partly hidden before her, which was familiar to many persons about her, a land which she was supposed to have entered, yet really had never entered. She was hardly more than a schoolgirl herself in years, but her spirit was so adven-

turous and so self-reliant that she always had seemed a half dozen years older.

To-day, however, the gloom and depression of the hour bore heavily upon her, and she sat in the big arm-chair, sunk in sad revery. Therefore, when she suddenly became aware of the tall, erect figure and long, eager step of Ronald Carnaquay, as he crossed on the flagstones at the corner, her eyes brightened and her face showed a genuine pleasure. With a hasty glance around the somewhat disorderly room, and an instinctive supple activity of her fingers about her throat and hair, she went to the door and welcomed her visitor.

Usually Ronald Carnaquay was geniality itself; he justified, at least in public, his somewhat elementary law of life, which was — "Cheerfulness conquers sadness." And most people felt brightened by contact with him. Adeline, herself, had rarely seen him in any other mood; but to-day, going to the door suddenly, without leaving this duty to the maid-servant, she surprised a very marked anxiety and gloom on her pupil-clergyman's face.

Leaving the two to their greetings and explanations and light badinage, let us see what was the cause of this unusual depression on the clerical countenance.

This it was. A half hour before, Carnaquay had been walking along a road, just outside the town, after visiting a sick man, when he discerned in front of him the figure of a young woman. His long, firm stride speedily brought him up with her; and as he drew near, walking unperceived on the sward beside the road, he saw that she was Olive Marshall and that she was reading a book.

The clergyman felt his pulse accelerate pleasurably, as he traced the sylph-like outlines of the young maiden, and he slackened his pace and kept a few feet behind her, for several rods. She was a graceful flower of a girl, and her free, frank ways were very winsome. He

wondered what she was reading. At times she stopped in her sauntering gait, lowered her book, and gazed up at the lowering skies and on the stricken trees with their few fugitive leaves. Presently he quickened his pace, being really eager to have that fresh, pink-and-white face turned up toward his, and to read her tremulous admiration in her humid, dancing eyes. "Good afternoon!" he said, lifting his hat as his nearer step aroused her from her absorption. And he prepared to receive from her one of those sunny glances and eager yet timid inquiries, which had so often quickened his vanity.

But such a reception was not to be his. On the contrary, Ronald Carnaquay here met one of the surprises of his life; for Olive Marshall turned, saw who it was, and her face grew rigid and stern, and in a most distant manner she responded to his greeting, and straightway returned to the reading of her book.

Carnaquay's quick eye saw that it was a copy of Omar Khayyam; and he understood that it harmonized somehow with the dreary tone of the day, and was an integral part of this fair young creature's mood, as she walked dejectedly in solitude here in this dull, dismal, country road. But he could not explain her surprising attitude toward himself; he was not quite disconcerted by her manner; he was not a man to be easily abashed; but she had plainly seen him, and yet had looked at him with a cool expression of aversion on her fair young face, which he had never seen there before.

She made a considerable show of indifference, but she was only a child, and not very clever at acting a part. Her eyes were glued to her book, but Carnaquay, walking beside her in puzzled silence for two or three minutes, noted that she did not turn a leaf. Then, too, as she stumbled over a rough place in the road, he saw her

cheek redden with vexation, and her rosy under lip was angrily drawn in between her teeth.

He was amused and yet annoyed, and withal perplexed, to explain her strange attitude toward him. "Olive," he began quietly, then recollected himself and amended, "Miss Olive, may I ask why you act in this singular way?"

There was an amused look in his eyes, which she could not see; but it faded away, as she stopped short in the road, closed her book, and turned toward him. "I do not wish to be disturbed, Dr. Carnaquay," she said in a determined tone. Then she waited.

He was more puzzled than ever; his instinct was more toward an indirect discovery of her strange alienation than toward a direct and candid inquiry. "I see that you are reading," he remarked casually, reaching toward the book. "What book is it, may I ask?"

But she would not meet him on this level. She drew back the volume and then started to walk on. Carnaquay began to grow anxious; the situation seemed more serious than he had supposed. Then he noticed, keeping apace with her, that there was a suspicious lump in her cheek, and he detected a flavor of wintergreen in the air. His sense of humor drove away for the moment his anxiety. This young person was gloomily brooding over Omar Khayyam, and communing with desolate, denuded nature, yet with a piece of candy comfortably tucked away in her pretty cheek. She seemed to him more than ever a child — a moody, sentimental child, and a charming one. He could not resist the temptation, and he remarked mischievously, "I like candy myself."

He saw at once that he had angered her. She was vexed at having her childishness thrown at her, at this particular time, when she was thinking such deep

thoughts and revelling in such profound though depressing emotions. She broke through the barrier which she had set for herself, and exclaimed, with youthful impulsiveness: "I will thank you to go on and leave me; I do not wish to talk with you. I do not — I do not wish — to talk with a man — with a — minister, I mean, who — who preaches — " (she stammered worse and worse, but the blood of the Marshalls was in her, and she rounded out the sentence with ringing defiance) — "who preaches sermons that — that he has st — that belong to some other person. There!" And, nearly bursting with rage, the damsel turned abruptly, and set off down the road at a rapid pace.

Ronald Carnaquay's humorous mood was utterly banished. He was much shocked; alas, not as an innocent person is shocked if charged with a crime, but shocked and cowed and yet angry at being found out. Instantly he resolved to hasten after her, and demand an explanation; but for two reasons he demurred: one was that he was disinclined to face the enraged young beauty, as a suppliant of even the mildest sort — that would be too far from their previous relationship; and the second reason was that he knew she was substantially correct in her implied charge. Palliate and condone plagiarism as he might, and even rigidly forswear it for the future, yet it hung like a black cloud over his past and he had hoped it was behind him forever. "Somehow the young witch has got hold of that," he muttered; and he knew how much narrower and more inexorable is youth than is mature age. Therefore, he was very doubtful of presenting adequate excuses to the irate young woman, even if he were to attempt it.

Thus he walked slowly along, allowing Olive, with her quick, nervous steps, to pass on out of sight. He

wondered how many people knew about his — his "mistaken method" — as he expressed it to himself. Then his natural buoyancy asserted itself, and he gave an angry shrug of the shoulders, and a faint smile came to his face. "Confound it all! It's none of their business, anyway," he exclaimed; and then he added, with increasing self-confidence, "I don't believe anybody knows about it outside the Marshalls." Whereupon he felt more cheerful, and resolved to — well, to go where he had often gone, during the past few months, — to Mrs. Adeline Guthrie. And his pace quickened; and pleasurable anticipation alternated, on his dark mobile countenance, with briefer and briefer periods of depressed reflection.

In this mood he came to Mrs. Guthrie's door, and was ushered in as we have seen.

The gloomy look which the young widow noted on the clergyman's face faded away under her smile, like mist before the sunrise. She had been dull and bored, and even gloomy also, and she was genuinely glad to have him call. And he, for his part, thought he had never seen her look so beautiful. To be sure her hair was a bit disarranged, and the high, tortoise-shell comb at the back of her round head threatened to part company altogether with the insubordinate tresses; but Ronald resisted the temptation to push the fragile object back into its place, or even to mention it — he had vivid memories of such a familiarity on a previous occasion, and of its unpleasant, frigid results. However, he clasped the soft, warm fingers, with his large, damp, firm hand, and said to himself that this young, rounded, refined womanhood was incomparably entrancing. At the sight of her smooth, level brow, and large, dark, fathomless eyes, the memory of the blue-eyed child, out in the country road, faded and faded, and her pose of

"profound grief seeking refuge in the pessimistic philosophy of the East" — this seemed to him theatrical and farcical.

The conversation went on easily between the two; they had been so much together that a certain amount of intimacy was inevitable. Yet always this freedom was maintained on one level only — that of the intellect; and any attempt on the clergyman's part to depart from this level was promptly checked by Adeline. They were like workmen in a mine who keep to a certain vein, although aware that other veins exist above and below them.

The melancholy of the day, and the previous experience of at least one of them, brought them into sympathy; and Adeline unconsciously found herself moving toward the piano, rather than toward her book-case. "What shall I sing?" she inquired, being apparently in an unusually elastic mood.

Usually she was reluctant about beginning to sing or play, although eager to continue when once started; and by this time, in her association with Carnaquay, she felt sure of his musical sympathy. So, running her fingers over the keys, in a meditative way, she waited for his suggestion. "There is the solo that our soprano sang last Sunday," said he. "What was the name of it? She sang it well, I thought."

"Oh, you mean 'There is a green hill far away,' by Gounod. Yes, she sang it very well. So well, in fact, that I think I will not venture it myself." And there was just a slight tinge of color in her cheeks, and of artistic vanity in her heart, as she laughingly declined, "Let me try, instead, Nevin's 'Rosary.'" And she added, as if excusing her touch of vanity to herself, "That is better suited to my voice."

Ronald sat where he could see her beautiful face —

normally quiet and even stern, but often transformed into great vivacity and vitality, when aroused by music, and there was an eager almost hungry expression on his own face which did not escape Mrs. Guthrie's notice; for she seemed uneasy, and stumbled in her accompaniment, and broke off in the midst of the second verse. "I cannot sing — I will not sing another verse," she cried, half laughing, yet with significance, "if you sit there in that chair. You — you stare so. You — "

She cared not to say all that she meant, and her visitor, realizing that he had revealed more than he had supposed, went obediently over and took a seat almost behind her. Then the song was begun again, and was sung with great delicacy and tenderness. It was simply done, but with a purity of fervor that was captivating.

Afterward she sang one or two other songs; and presently she began — hardly knowing what she sang — that passionate, sensuous, oriental song of Delilah, from the cantata of that name, by Saint Saens: "Ah, to the power of love surrender! Rise with me to its heights of splendor!" She gathered interest and force as she sang; and her great black luminous eyes opened like starry orbs, as she expressed the fierce savage fervor of certain lines; and, at other more repressed passages, they sympathetically curtained themselves, and the rich mezzo voice sank into wooing luxurious tones.

She was singing better than on the previous songs, when she became conscious of a hand on her shoulder; it tightened its grasp, and hurt her. She stopped short, surprised, perplexed, and breathing in short, angry gasps. "Why — why did you — "

It was Carnaquay whose grasp had aroused and hurt her. He stepped back, from before her indignant gaze, as if apologizing for touching her. His face had an appealing look in it that further surprised her.

"Please — please do not sing that song!" he exclaimed, throwing out his hand impulsively. "I — I wish you wouldn't sing it. That's all."

Carnaquay had more to say, on the tip of his tongue, but he could not quite bring himself to utter it. He could not tell this woman that the song seemed to him to taint her lips and her soul, as she gave such a full interpretation of it. He had once heard the entire cantata, and he was willing to hear any other woman sing that song, but not this woman. He could not and would not hear it. And the fierce revolt of his soul against it told him anew how precious, how holy, she was in his sight.

As for Adeline, she was puzzled and annoyed. She had rendered the song, with all the abandonment of an artistic musical nature, caring far more for the music itself than for the words, and she could not quite understand her visitor's abrupt protest and evident pain. The maid-like innocence of her great inquiring eyes reopened conjectures in Carnaquay's mind, which he never could satisfactorily settle; and the sombre garb of widowhood which this woman wore did not help him to a solution of his problem. At all events she was a queen, and he was her vassal.

There was a short period of ill-adjustment; and then Carnaquay, who had gone to the window and was staring out into the mist, noticed that she was softly playing "Strangers Yet" — that simple, sentimental little song which she had told him he should be ashamed of liking so well; but he did like it, and she was softly, invitingly playing and humming, and he knew that he was free to join.

Before the stanzas, with their melodramatic appeals, were all sung, the clergyman was in full swing, singing, as he always did, with vigor and no self-consciousness and a genuine love of rhythm and melody. After that

Adeline tried to teach him Schubert's "Who is Sylvia?" But he was evidently not so fond of this severer and musically purer school. After a while he recollected a song which they had tried once before. "That song of Kennedy's," he explained. "I think it was something about gems."

"Oh, yes! I remember," responded his hostess, turning over a pile of music — 'Deck not with Gems,' by Walter Kennedy." She was reading from the title-page; and opening the music glanced over the words. "By Tom Moore. Dear Tom Moore. He knew how to write love poems that had real poetry in them. There now!" And she seated herself and began the accompaniment. At the proper place she nodded, and Carnaquay began. He did not know the song well, but he was apt, and the music fitted the words so perfectly that after the first stanza he was quite at ease and rolled out the phrases — not so delicately as his attentive instructress wished, but with a strength and fervor which partly annoyed and partly frightened her.

> "Deck not with gems thy lovely form for me;
> They, in my eyes, can add no charm to thee."

Adeline Guthrie felt the power and passion of this strong man flinging itself against her, as the rushing storm-wind flings itself against a slender but pliant sapling; and she bent over the piano as if trying to make out the music on the page more clearly, but in her heart there was a great unrest. Fear and anger and — and something that was not either of these, something that was almost joy, — yet she would not trust it; and she hurried on toward the end: —

> "Time, on thy cheek, his withering hand may press,
> He may do all but make me love thee less;
> The mind defies him, and the charm lies there;
> I must have loved thee hadst thou not been fair."

The words leaped from Carnaquay's very soul. He never had sung words which seemed to him to express so perfectly his attitude toward this divine creature. Her form, her face, were dear indeed to him. When he had touched her hand, in turning a page of the music, he had seemed to feel an electric shock, and her fingers — if only he could be sure — seemed tipped with fire. But it was her mind, so rich and full and alert and sympathetic — her very self, throbbing, yet restrained, behind body and mere intellect — it was her own dear, divine self that he loved; and he stood and sang those thrilling words of avowal and consecration, as if he were standing, for the first time, before the altar of heaven, with an angel smiling upon him.

But Adeline Guthrie did not smile. The song ended, and she sprang impetuously from the seat, as if released from some restraint. Indeed, she was much nearer collapse of some sort, than she cared to acknowledge. She knew well to whom Carnaquay was singing, and she was flushed with excitement, and defiant in spirit, yet she was glad to see to the very bottom of this emotional nature of his. There was usually so much that was artificial in him, that this consuming passion, sweeping away as it did all pretences and cautions, was a relief, intellectually, to her; and, even in her heart, the echoes which it set up were not wholly unpleasant.

Carnaquay could not quiet down to the reading of an essay of Emerson's, as Adeline now suggested. His somewhat curt refusal to do this was easy for her to explain; and she, for her own part, was not sorry to have him decline, and almost glad to have him take leave, which he very soon did.

She was much more self-possessed than was he, as they shook hands, but she resented the vice-like grasp of possession which she thought he gave her hand.

And she went back into her room, after the door had closed behind him, and was alternately glad and regretful, by turns joyously free and pathetically lonely, and considerably chagrined over her failure to keep to intellectual levels of instruction.

Thus matters stood between them, and had so stood for months.

CHAPTER XVII

MORE SPOTS, AND LARGER

"How save the Ark, or Holy of Holies, unprofaned a day,
From his unscrupulous curiosity, that handles everything as if to buy?"

— J. R. Lowell.

When Freeman returned from the chapel, an hour later, he found Mr. Marshall there. He had run in to see Freeman about some better kind of heating apparatus at the chapel, but first Lawrence asked permission to tell them both about the scene at Uncle Ben's. "So you may expect a call from him at any time," concluded Lawrence, after detailing the interview, including the old man's desire to make a will, "and I beg that you won't forget about the cats." Whereupon they all laughed, and Mr. Marshall promised to fulfil his duties as well as he could.

After the discussion of the heating apparatus, Mr. Marshall still lingered, and presently sat down again, even though he had taken up his hat and cane to go. "I have thought for some time," he said, "of talking with you and Mr. Freeman about our minister, Dr. Carnaquay. You know me well enough to be sure that I am not a man to encourage idle gossip, and I can therefore speak plainly — in fact we all can — without reserve."

Instantly Mr. and Mrs. Freeman were on the alert, and feared that they were to hear something unpleasant about Olive and Carnaquay; but their anxiety was soon

allayed, as Mr. Marshall said: "The point which I wished most to confer with you about is this. My son, Ned, was reading a book the other day, — a book of essays by an English writer, — and he came upon several sentences, which seemed to him familiar; after thinking a while, he remembered them as given by Dr. Carnaquay, in one of his recent sermons. Not fully trusting his memory, he went down to the newspaper office, looked over the files, and found a report of the sermon which he had partly recalled. A comparison of that printed report, with the pages of the book by the English author, revealed the fact that paragraph after paragraph, to the extent of a full page, had been literally and bodily incorporated into the sermon."

"When was the book published?" asked Freeman.

"More than ten years ago," replied Mr. Marshall. "But what has that to do with the question, if I may ask?"

"Only this," said Lawrence; "I know that preachers often use old sermons, and I wished to see which of the two, the sermon or the book of essays, was earlier in print. If the book was printed so long as twenty years ago, or even fifteen, that must have been considerably before Carnaquay began to write sermons or prepare them in any way."

Lawrence then waited for Mr. Marshall to proceed. He did not like to take the lead, in any comment on his fellow-minister's acts; but he could not refuse to consider the subject and even to express an opinion if it were asked. He wished to be just, although he was startled at the suggestion of plagiarism; it was a clerical sin which never had any attraction whatever for himself; but he knew in a general way that here and there preachers yielded to it.

"The matter has troubled me considerably," con-

tinued Mr. Marshall, leaning forward and pushing up his thick, black beard, as was his habit when engrossed in a problem. "There can be no reasonable doubt that Dr. Carnaquay has used that book. In fact, Mr. Freeman, if I may express the situation, exactly as it appears to a plain business man, he has been stealing from it. Is that so?"

Lawrence had always felt doubtful of the keenness of Ronald Carnaquay's moral sense, and in his own heart was inclined to agree with the stern mill-owner's inexorable conclusion; but he knew well the evils of hasty judgments, and he cast about for some possible explanation of the coincidence between sermon and essays. "There is a great difference among preachers," he said, "in respect to memory. Now I have a poor memory for words and phrases, and rarely attempt to quote a stanza of poetry; but Dr. Carnaquay, as I can testify, has an excellent verbal memory, and can recite easily whole paragraphs which he has merely glanced through. Now it occurs to me that his tenacious memory may explain this striking resemblance. He undoubtedly must have read the essays, but it is quite possible — I don't say probable or improbable, but certainly *possible* — that he quoted the passages, without knowing that he was quoting; they may have come into his head, and he may have thought they were his own."

"Yes, that is possible," slowly assented Mr. Marshall, in his bass voice, and still looking fixedly at the floor.

Mrs. Freeman here spoke: "There is another possible explanation. He may have used those passages in his sermon as quotations, putting quotation-marks around them, and the printer may have carelessly omitted the quotation-marks."

Lawrence and his wife looked inquiringly at Mr. Marshall, who, after a moment's silence, said, "Have

either of you any further suggestions about the matter?"

Lawrence thought his visitor's reserve of manner indicated some hidden plan or idea which he was waiting to unfold later. He knew that there would be no use in urging his visitor to speak his mind, until Mr. Marshall chose to do so. "I myself hold such copying of words and phrases, by a public speaker," said he, "to be nothing less than stealing; only, a person who is under suspicion should be allowed considerable latitude for unconscious repetition. In England such use of other people's words and phrases, and even entire sermons, is not looked at as it is here; in fact, English papers openly print advertisements of sermons offered for sale; and I suppose that busy clergymen, or indolent ones, or stupid ones, really buy them and use them, over there, without a word of explanation."

"There! That is the point," said Mr. Marshall. "I will now tell you that I have talked with Dr. Carnaquay about the matter, showing him the evidence and giving him a chance to explain. I thought it only just to him, to bring the matter to his attention."

Lawrence and his wife both knew how reluctant the genial but just mill-owner must have been, to thus seek an interview with his minister, on such an errand. But they respected him more than ever, as he sat in the chair before them, and stated the simple truth, in a calm and regretful manner. "What in the world did he offer as an excuse?" exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, impulsively; for the charge was a serious one.

"He said, substantially, the two things which you have just mentioned, Mr. Freeman. He did not seem greatly disturbed, but declared that his very tenacious memory must have played him this bad turn; and then he went on coolly to say that there were no peculiar

rights of property in ideas, and that there were no new ideas under the sun, and that the English custom is as you have just stated. I must confess that I was glad I had not started the interview with a direct accusation; but, instead, as if merely inquiring about a matter which he could probably explain. He was so calm and self-possessed that I, who know little about ministers' ways, was obliged to acquiesce and thank him and withdraw. But I am not at all satisfied, and I am glad to have this talk with you. I myself can't see that such use of another man's phraseology, word for word, is any better than taking and using his hoe or his horse or his roll of bank-notes."

"I am compelled to agree with you," said Lawrence. "I have heard the assertion made, by some of my brother-preachers, that ideas are common property and can be appropriated, wherever found; but while that is in a measure true, I have always felt that the copying of expressions and well-turned phrases and, of course, of whole paragraphs, as in this case — all such appropriation was theft; at least, it would be for me, if I indulged in it."

"I have not spoken of this matter with anybody except my son," remarked Mr. Marshall. "I think that he and I and you two are all that know of it. Let us keep the matter to ourselves. Perhaps this exposure will be wisely used by Dr. Carnaquay. I wouldn't like to have Olive hear about the matter. I hope she hasn't got wind of it. She has a very high opinion of her minister, but she has, also, an unusually intense and even rigid sense of right and wrong. I fear she would refuse to ever hear him preach again, if she learned that he coolly appropriated other people's essays or sermons."

Lawrence did not glance at his wife, nor she at him, as these words were uttered; but one and the same

thought was in both their minds. Both resisted the impulse to broach the subject of Olive's decidedly romantic and passionate interest in Carnaquay; for both were uncertain as to the extent of Mr. Marshall's knowledge of the affair.

Therefore husband and wife sat in silence, but their minds seemed to touch each other, as if by telepathy. In a moment Mr. Marshall continued: "I find Dr. Carnaquay a strange sort of man. I like him, but I never feel quite sure of him. There, for example, is his inimitable way of telling stories, in his sermons. You have heard him, at least once, I believe, Mrs. Freeman?"

"Yes, I have; and I was greatly — interested," rejoined Mrs. Freeman.

What looked like a smile crept over Mr. Marshall's face; his extensive beard rendered difficult any absolute identification of his facial movements. "You speak with discretion," he said. "But I must admit that his stories are extremely well told, only they often don't bear any relation to the text or to the subject which he announces at the beginning. And quite often, I hear him tell some story, as if it had happened to him, the week before, and I can recall having heard the story twenty-five years ago, at least. I haven't quite liked that way of doing. It makes the story more effective, of course, but it does so at the cost of — well, of entire, exact truthfulness."

"I noticed the same thing," said Mrs. Freeman, "when I heard him preach." And she added, with a dignified bending of her erect form, yet with a faint suggestion of satire: "The plain truth is often so unattractive, Mr. Marshall. You know how becomingly a little fringe of falsehood can set it off."

"Yes, I suppose so," assented the visitor, sententiously, but evidently catching her meaning. "If only he

weren't a minister of the gospel! I rather expect such 'fringes,' as you call them, in an after-dinner speaker's talk. But in a Christian preacher, and in church — " Mr. Marshall raised his hand deprecatingly.

"Carnaquay is one of the most interesting types for study that I know," said Lawrence, rousing himself as if from a revery. "He seems to me peculiarly a product of our time. He is created — and others like him — in large measure, by certain kinds of churches: they demand a certain type of minister or preacher, and he is the 'supply' which rises to meet that 'demand.' I have often thought, in reflecting upon this phenomenon of our modern pulpits, of that text in the Bible — in the prophet Jeremiah, I think — which says, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." That is the explanation of the existence of false prophets and evil priests, to-day as of old. It is the people, who really hold the power; what they demand, they receive. If they demand, in ministers, the Christian virtues, then men of those virtues will enter the ministry; and if they demand preachers who are brilliant story-tellers and clever entertainers, then such men will find their way into the profession, and help to fix the low standard of the pulpit more firmly in the hearts of the people."

"Would you mind telling me," asked Mr. Marshall, as his host paused, "what you really think of Dr. Carnaquay? That is, what you think of him as a minister?"

"I have no objection to expressing my thought frankly," said Lawrence, "especially to a man like you, Mr. Marshall. I personally like Carnaquay, more and more, as I get at him; of course I must say plainly that I do not think his standards of his profession, either intellectually or morally, are what they ought to be. As I have often said to Mrs. Freeman, he is not

immoral so much as unmoral; he does not quite transgress the many minor moralities, consciously, but he simply is blind and deaf to the finer shades of ministerial ethics. He is, primarily, a shrewd business man, with a sort of Æolian attachment of clever talk; he is, from what I can gather, a 'raconteur'; he is amusing, as some favorite 'end-man,' in a negro minstrel-show, is amusing. He has ability in two directions, each of which would be remunerative: one is his business ability, and the other is his picturesque story-telling faculty. Now his business ability does not avail very much in the ministry, because there are good business men on the church committees; but, as a clever story-teller and a reciter of memorized poems and famous eloquent passages, he is without sharp competition, and partly so because the majority of preachers have consciences and will not prostitute their talents and degrade their sacred office, by unblushingly yielding to the demand of the public for amusement. If Carnaquay went into theatre life, or the vaudeville world, he would be successful, but not as strikingly successful — Heaven forgive the word — as now he is in a pulpit; because there are many variety performers, either with or without burnt cork, who can equal him in his vivid powers of narration and his facility for provoking laughter. Whereas, among clergymen, there are as yet only a few who descend to this level of comedy and farce; although, if the demand continues, I dare not say how great the supply may be."

Lawrence, in his own heart, felt regret and even a strong antagonism, for such a degradation of the pulpit; but he had meditated upon it so much, and had himself slipped so utterly out of the arena of pulpit competition, as it exists in most communities, that he had lost all bitterness of feeling, and now spoke quietly and even philosophically.

"Of course we mustn't deny people proper amusements," interpolated Mr. Marshall; "only you would say, I suppose, that the church is not for that purpose — at least not solely for that."

"Precisely!" assented Lawrence. "I believe in laughter and in the good it can do to human bodies and minds. But the church, historically and essentially, stands for the religious and moral instruction and stimulation of human minds and hearts; it should stand for that, more than it has in the past. What I object to is that too often, men and women, who need moral reënforcement and spiritual quickening, go to church, to the place which is supposed to meet those needs, and are simply amused; and they are thus injuriously led to believe that they have been benefited, morally and spiritually. Perhaps they have been, in a gentle stimulating way, but their conduct or their faith will not be substantially affected by the exercise of their risibilities."

Lawrence paused a moment or two, as if deliberating, and then continued: "I mustn't bore you, Mr. Marshall, with my reflections, but I have often been struck by the resemblance between the pulpit vaudeville, of certain kinds of churches, and patent medicines. I have observed that if a person will only concoct some toothsome liquid or paste, and then urge its merits as a medicine, he can find a ready market for it. People like sweets, but they do not quite wish to spend money for those sweets, under that name; so, if the clever person will only invent a chewing-gum, or a cream tablet, or a sparkling drink, and then put forth strong claims for its medicinal efficacy, he will find a far larger market for such a compound than he could find for sugar or cinnamon or wintergreen alone. People like to indulge themselves, but they wish to have the excuse of seeming to be ameliorating their aches and pains."

"You have omitted one very widely sold class of so-called medicines," suggested Mr. Marshall. "I have an idea that the alcoholic base of most 'bitters' and 'tonics' is the explanation of their wide sale. People actually become confirmed drunkards, through continued indulgence in such deadly stuff."

"Yes, I know from observation that you are correct," resumed Lawrence. "But the parallel which I started to draw is this. People like to be amused, and they like it most when it passes under some higher name; as they like sweets and the taste of whiskey, especially when disguised as medicine, so they enjoy fun and laughter, especially when called 'sermons' or 'lectures.'"

"And this principle, as applied to our friend Carnaquay, becomes simply the explanation of his — I will not say 'success,' but his popularity. His genial good nature, however, is also a factor, I think."

"Yes, and I credit him, after observing him rather closely," added Mr. Marshall, "I credit him with considerable kindness of heart and generosity. What say you to that, Mr. Freeman?"

"I quite agree," responded Lawrence, warmly. "The man's heart is all right; as a man of the world he would get on perfectly well, and would amass wealth; indeed, he has taken pretty long steps in that direction already. Furthermore, such an error as this of plagiarism, or, to put it plainly, literary theft, a wrong-doing which arises from his dull moral nature — this would not come within his range of experience as a business man; and as for the moral questions which do arise in mercantile life, I think I have heard you yourself say, Mr. Marshall, that custom and even policy unite to keep a man straight, even if personally he were not inclined that way."

The three friends found themselves in close sympathy,

concerning the minister of Emmanuel Church, the more closely they analyzed him. And they agreed in looking upon him somewhat as a "misfit," in the social mechanism; superficially successful as he was, but essentially and hopelessly a failure, he was made possible, he was created professionally, in large measure, by the wish and will of certain classes of the public. As Lawrence again quoted, "The people would have it so."

As Mr. Marshall went on, chatting more easily and unrestrainedly than when he came in, several matters of interest transpired, regarding Carnaquay. One was that he was making very few calls in these days. His zeal in that direction seemed largely to have evaporated. Testing this fact by the one standard, by which all his professional life was to be tested, it was evident that he had decided that such a use of his time was not needed, in order to insure his success, — in order to hold his large congregation, and to keep the church exchequer full. Any purpose of personal ministry, in knowing intimately his people, was not to be attributed to him. There was even one case, which Mr. Marshall now narrated, which led to a difference of opinion among the three friends.

It was this. A family, made up of a man, his wife, and two children, had given up all connection with the church; they had ceased to rent a pew, and they would not subscribe to any of the philanthropic causes, in which Emmanuel Church was interested. The man was a machinist, and received good wages; the family lived comfortably, and spent money freely for luxuries and amusements. When urged by the treasurer to keep up his pew-rent, the man became angry, said he had no use for the church, and remarked that he wanted his money for other things. Whether wisely or unwisely, the treasurer mentioned this conversation to Carnaquay; and, by a strange coincidence, the machinist's child fell

ill and died, within a month after Carnaquay had learned about his action and his remarks. Naturally, and without any misgivings, they sent to the minister of Emmanuel Church, asking him to conduct the burial services.

Mr. Marshall was carefully narrating this episode, and, at this point, he paused and asked Lawrence, abruptly, "What would you have done, Mr. Freeman, if you had been in Dr. Carnaquay's place? Would you have conducted the burial service?"

Lawrence replied at once. "It is the sort of situation which faces ministers frequently. In such cases I have always responded with an affirmative. I will not now stop to explain and analyze motives, but suffice it to say that without doubt I would have conducted the service. What did Carnaquay do? I am anxious to know."

"I can guess," interjected Mrs. Freeman, hastily.

Mr. Marshall nodded toward her and said, "You would guess correctly. He did not go. He sent a brief note, in which he said that he was busy with the duties of the parish, which had a right to his time and effort, since it paid him for them; too busy to feel justified in using his time and strength for work outside the parish; and he hoped they would send for the clergyman, whoever he might be, whom they considered their pastor, and whom they helped to maintain in the community. Of course there was no other clergyman, as nearly related to them as was Dr. Carnaquay; but they were obliged to send for a retired minister who lived next door, and the funeral service was held."

Mr. Marshall looked at his two listeners inquiringly, but neither of them replied. Presently, Mrs. Freeman, always frank and sincere, threw back her head with a characteristic gesture, and said: "Although I think he ought to have gone, I must admit that I can see his side

of the matter. Many of the duties, which ministers are freely called upon to perform, are in this same class. They are duties which are expected and even demanded by people who will not lift a finger nor contribute one penny to make possible in the community, that service and ministration which they, on occasion, so confidently and insistently claim. Mr. Carnaquay simply carried out logically his theory and practice of the clerical life as a commercialism. Strictly speaking, judging a minister by the same standards that are used by most people — not all — in judging his so-called 'success,' — namely 'value received,' 'exchange of values,' — I think he would be justified in rendering service to only those who paid him for it; that is, those who help support the church which maintains him. Of course I mean to except those who cannot afford to contribute. In this case, however, I understood you that the man could afford to do his share in the maintenance of the church."

Lawrence had folded his arms, and sat with head bowed forward, and with a faint suggestion of a smile playing about his mouth. He was letting his wife "have her say," as they often facetiously expressed it in the family. He did not quite agree with her position here taken, yet he was rather glad to have her express her views to their trusted friend. At this point he thought it best to change the subject. "I have been told," he remarked, looking up, "that Carnaquay's style of preaching has changed somewhat of late. Is that so, Mr. Marshall? Have you noticed it?"

"I don't think that I would have noticed it myself," said the mill-owner, frankly. "But Ned and Olive have called my attention to it. He certainly does not stride about the platform so much and gesture so wildly; and there really seems to be more — more, well, what I would call 'substance' in his discourses."

"Your daughter, Olive, told me the other day," said Mrs. Freeman, "that he quotes Browning and Carlyle and Emerson and such men, much more than formerly."

"Yes — yes," assented Mr. Marshall, doubtfully; adding, with an indulgent smile as he thought of his dearly loved daughter, "if Olive says so, why, he does. But I hadn't noticed that in the sermons; I'm not very familiar with those writers. I have a dim recollection that he gave a reading from Browning at Miss Metcalf's a few weeks ago. Did you know of that?"

"Indeed I did," responded Mrs. Freeman, vivaciously. "Lawrence and I were invited but did not go. Miss Metcalf's literary and æsthetic entertainments have always interested me. She has several of them every year, you know. Not that she knows or cares anything about poetry or art or sociology, or any of those things; but she dearly loves to manage. And she picks up any literary or æsthetic 'light,' who happens to be in the public eye, and gathers a company under her roof to listen. She herself never hears any of the instructive talks or readings, for she is as busy as a bee, all the time, attending to the arrangements. She makes a picturesque and effective hostess, I must admit; but her real interest is in the details of food, clothing, chairs, and the like. Miss Metcalf is a most pragmatic woman."

"She is, indeed, a capable person," said Mr. Marshall. "I have noticed that, although she always disclaims interest in woman's rights and similar movements, she is a person eminently fitted for the exercise of such privileges, and finds her greatest joy in directing men and women, according to her wishes. I have heard a number of people say that she would make a good minister's wife."

This was said with a significant smile, and Lawrence laughed as he inquired, "What minister?"

Then they all laughed, but Freeman and his wife were a trifle uneasy over this turn in the conversation. The subject of Carnaquay's marriage intentions was a delicate one to discuss with the father of Olive Marshall. Mrs. Freeman, with a woman's quickness of social resource, suggested in an indifferent way: "Mark my words, he is not half so much interested in Miss Metcalf as he is in Mrs. Adeline Guthrie. I am told that the charming widow was not present at the Browning reading, although her interest in that poet is very well known."

"Indeed!" interjected Lawrence, "I had not heard that."

"My dear, you have many things still to learn," remarked his wife, with impressive condescension.

"But her non-attendance does not signify," continued Mr. Freeman. "There might have been several good reasons for it."

"Yes; and two such reasons I can think of at once. She might not have wished to hear him read, in public, poems which she and he together had read in private. She might have been a little sensitive about them. And again, the simple reason may have been — and from what I have heard I am inclined to think it the real reason — she may not have been invited."

"Oh, I think you are a little severe on our "Lady of the Snowy Locks," ventured Lawrence, though not very confidently.

"Not at all. You know as well as I do that she is a very determined and even vindictive woman, and watchful and suspicious also. I am tolerably sure that her heart has been not a little stirred by the reverend gentleman's attentions and compliments; and she must also know that he and Mrs. Guthrie are a great deal together. So I put two and two together and get my conclusion."

"M—m! M—m!" was the mill-owner's only comment, as he evidently balanced the probabilities, behind his bushy black beard.

"More than that," continued Mrs. Freeman, a little nervously, eager to urge her point as strongly as she could, "I have not seen Adeline as often, lately, as I did formerly. She does not come here so much, and when she does come, I cannot interest her much in the classes and clubs of our North Side—matters which did greatly interest her a few months ago. And yet she does not seem depressed, but, on the contrary, noticeably happy; and, what is most significant, I have seen her distinctly curb her joyous expression, as if realizing — bright little woman that she is — that such buoyancy of manner and speech was revealing a condition of her heart which she did not wish known."

After a little, Lawrence said more seriously, "I wonder if she knows this man, or is she led captive, as most women — begging your ladyship's pardon" (with a low bow to Mrs. Freeman), — "as most women are, by their blind emotions, by their great need of love?"

Mrs. Freeman did not linger over her husband's fun, but answered him slowly and emphatically. "Adeline Guthrie knows Ronald Carnaquay better, more critically, than does any one of us. She is a very acute woman. She sees the faults in him, as plainly as we do. And I believe she also sees the undeveloped good that is underneath his showy and conceited exterior manners. She is a clever and noble woman, and she can make a man of him, if she has a fair chance. She is no egotist, as Miss Metcalf is, and very likely would find her own best life in developing his life. Clever wives are of two kinds. One kind absorbs a husband, and the other develops him. At any rate, I hope she will get affection. She deserves more of it and on more even terms, than she

ever could have had from that dried-up old theologian, Dr. Guthrie. He was old enough to be — not merely her father, but her grandfather."

"You are marking out quite a broad field of missionary effort for Mrs. Guthrie," said Lawrence, good-naturedly, "and I think she might enjoy the work, provided that she takes it up; for she is a woman of rare penetration and stimulative power." Then he added, with a twinkle of the eye, "If she does effect a reform in the man, I shall think it a most praiseworthy success, and shall consider it a plain case of 'widow's might.'"

"There, there!" admonished his wife. "Puns are ruled out. I really mean all that I say, and more. I am no Deborah to prophesy, but I think Time will justify my guesses. If those two read Browning very much, they must have noted the 'Song from James Lee,' where it says: —

> "'If you loved only what were worth your love,
> Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you.
> Make the low nature better by your throes!
> Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!'"

Lawrence made a faint show of repressing her. "Don't, my dear! Don't, I beg you! Don't confess so publicly your missionary purpose in marrying me! Mr. Marshall can now understand, as never before, my rare good fortune."

The party was becoming infected with the general spirit of fun-making, so that even Mr. Marshall, rising to go, remarked jocosely: "Gossip! Gossip! Most of our talk this morning. I must go away and get over its evil influence as soon as possible." And he bade them both a hearty and even affectionate good-by, and went out.

CHAPTER XVIII

OLD HEARTS AND YOUNG LOVE

"The healing of the world is in its nameless saints."
— ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

IT was quite true, as Uncle Ben had told Mr. Freeman, that Mis' Snow was expecting him, Uncle Ben, that morning. Not that the engagement was of a very serious nature — it was merely to come over and "visit," and perhaps play the violin. But the old man's honest nature admitted no shades and grades in obligations; he had no sense of proportion. Either he "ought" or he "ought not," no matter what the deed might be, great or small; the sense of duty which constrained him to pick up and wipe and straighten a bent pin, when his purblind old eyes discerned one on the sidewalk, was just as great and inexorable as was his feeling of duty about performing his regular morning task of opening and sweeping out the hardware store near his home. In the faithful performance of this task he never failed. Nor did he fail to pick up and save the bent, tarnished pin — not that he used all the pins thus rescued, but he practised this economy from principle. Morality and not utility was the strong motive of his faithful old heart.

So he hurried away, in his feeble, shuffling fashion, gaze lowered, oblivious of the city's life, and presented himself at "Mis'" Snow's house. A large and very comfortable house it was, too, surrounded by a garden,

and this by a high stone wall. It had been built by Mr. Snow, thirty years before. He was, in his youth, a carpenter, and later in life, by dint of untiring energy, a prosperous contractor and builder. He had ruled everybody with an iron hand. His wife, after the death of her masterful liege, had developed an average amount of self-reliance and individuality; but this had lain dormant and unsuspected in her heart, through forty years of married life, because there was no room for it in the companionship of her assertive husband.

She was a worn, weary old woman, was Mrs. Snow, and lonely; glad to have "Benjamin," as she always called Uncle Ben, come over and "visit" with her. He was her one link with her past. With him she could go over the old life, and with him debate her little economies. Her face was heavily seamed, and her hands knotted and ridged, with those first ten years of housekeeping, when her saving of pennies was an important factor in the growth of the family exchequer. Those economies of the former days she could not lay aside, even now when she was not expending her income. She still knitted heavy woollen socks, and gave them away to people — who grumbled at the smallness of the gift. She still rolled and twisted paper lamp-lights, insisting that her maids should use them; and they complied, but used a half card of matches, in retaliation, when her bent old back was turned. She went down into the kitchen frequently, — indeed she felt more "at home" there than in any other part of the huge mansion, — scolded the cook for taking off such large parings from potatoes and apples, then returned to her sitting room, perhaps to write a check for a hundred dollars, in favor of some charity which had managed to reach her eye or ear and heart.

Uncle Ben entered the house, as always, at the side

door, and made his way into the sitting room, where Mrs. Snow spent much of her time. The lofty ceiling gave extensive wall space, but this space was sparsely occupied by pictures. There was one old painting of the departed master of the house; and if he could be judged by his determined jaw and the puffy fulness of his red face, he must have closed with this world, in a fit of apoplexy, induced by a severe access of rage. Then there were oil-paintings of a cow, a dog, and a horse; also one of the old homestead where Mr. Snow was born — all executed by an "artist who had studied in Paris." Besides these a few cheap prints, cut from illustrated papers, added their æsthetic influence to the room. A book-case full of — I will not say "books," but — beautiful bindings was carefully closed and locked, and stood strongly protected by the piano, itself closed and piled high with work-baskets and newspapers and heaps of neatly arranged linen.

"How de do?" said Uncle Ben, cheerfully, as he entered, with fiddle under arm.

"Well, now! is that you?" responded the old lady, hardly looking up. She was busy with some objects in her hand, and now arose and went across the room. "These new teeth of mine don't fit good, and I wish you'd take 'em down and have 'em filed off a little on the under side. There, I'll do 'em up in a paper." And the package was neatly prepared and was transferred, without comment, to Uncle Ben's pocket.

"I hain't seen ye for a long spell, Benjamin," she said, seating herself and taking up an old dress which she was ripping. "Where ye ben?" Her gaunt face was bent over her work, and her scant locks — once a bright yellow, but now, in blending with white, become a yellowish green — but imperfectly concealed the white scalp beneath.

With such a companionship as theirs — weather-beaten and sun-dried, through nearly half a century — there was little need of the art of conversation. To be together was a calm, restful experience for both. Remarks dropped, like apples from a tree, when they were ripe; there was no shaking of the tree. Sometimes questions remained unanswered, or were answered by the questioner. Occasionally a difference of opinion arose, and some point was mildly debated, with impartial, philosophic frankness on both sides. "How's the weather, Benjamin?" asked Mrs. Snow, with indifference.

"Clear's a whistle," responded Uncle Ben, with conciseness, unwrapping his violin.

"There's a storm a-getherin', I guess," said Mrs. Snow. "The wind whiffled 'round this morning into the east."

"Dunno but you're 'bout right," conceded the old man, testing the violin strings. "These ere strings hez fell a leetle; they allus do when it's a mite damp. Hev yer looked at the almanick?"

This consultation of the "Farmers' Almanac," was a never failing source of satisfaction to the old couple. Both of them could remember turning its pages, as far back as they could remember anything; the very figures of the goat and waterman and bull and intertwined fishes, at the tops of the pages, seemed to gently rustle the leaves of memory in their hearts. So that they always consulted its occult prophecies with a trustfulness which was justified, whatever the Sibylline order in which "rain" and "clear," "stormy" and "fair" arranged themselves, up and down the stairway of the month.

As usual, when Mrs. Snow had unearthed the yellow pamphlet from her work-basket, the definite prophecy for the morrow was not made clear. No more was the

oracle at Dodona clear in statement; yet there was no lack of inquirers. So with Uncle Ben and Mrs. Snow; they found that the word "changeable" was the word nearest that day and date; but it was two days ahead; and four days behind them began, "Look for clearing weather," and extended through two days. Thus they were in doubt — agreeable, debatable, insoluble doubt — as to how far forward the "clearing weather" ruled, and how far back the "changeable" dictum extended.

So the conversation and comfortable conjecture meandered pleasantly on, like a stream through level lands, during an hour. Uncle Ben picked away absently at his violin, and Mrs. Snow recalled various patches of marvellous weather from her past, and recounted, for the fortieth time at least, her perilous journey, during a violent shower, across Five Mile Pond, with her husband and a cow and some hens in the rowboat.

To all such recitals Uncle Ben gave a non-resisting ear. If the old lady had stopped, at any point, he could have continued the story, in his slower, more matter-of-fact fashion. Occasionally he grew a trifle restless under her reminiscences, and never hesitated to let his restlessness be known. "Why, Elviry," he said calmly, at such times, "you tole me thet yisterday," or, "Yis, I know, I know'd thet afore." And the old dame with the yellow-green hair took the checkmate without remonstrance; indeed, as is usually the case with aged people, she had been talking more to herself than to her listener, had been merely living over again the beloved past, merely touching once and again, for her own pleasure, the slackened cords of old experiences, sighing, as she did it, at the feeble response they gave.

From the weather and kindred topics they passed to aches and ailments. "And haow is yer rheumatiz,

Elviry?" asked the old man. "Mine's ben better lately."

"Oh, about the same," replied the widow, mournfully. "I've been a-tryin' a new medicine; but it don't do me no good. Thank the Lord for his marcies, though, I ain't so bad as some."

She brightened up, with this burst of self-exhortation, and then relapsed as she added: "I was disapp'inted, I must say, in that medicine. It was spoke so high of, in the paper. Why, do you know, Benjamin" (here the old lady paused in her work and spoke with animation), "there was a man in the paper that couldn't step one step, nor lift his arm above his head, and now he can jump and swing an axe with the best of 'em."

Uncle Ben never exhibited any outward traces of excitement. "Hm—m—thet's good," he soliloquized; "I'm glad to hear thet. An' where did you say this man was, Elviry?"

Mrs. Snow had literally said that he was in the newspaper, which was about the truth of the matter, to her mind; but now she amended her statement, languidly, "I b'lieve he lives out in Colorado or Dakota or one of them places."

"Oh—oh—is thet so? Thet's too fur ter dew much abaout, ain't it," responded Uncle Ben, regretfully.

"Why, what did you think about doin'?"

"Waal, I dunno, 'xactly; I kinder hed an idee—an idee—" Here the old man's vague idea "petered out," and he sank into silence.

"Did you think of goin' to see him, Benjamin?" inquired Mrs. Snow, "to ask him about it? 'Cause if you did, there ain't no use. Them people that is cured in the papers, always live a long way off. P'r'aps now," she added, with a touch of native penetration and humor, which was lost on the old man, "if we took a Colorado

or Dakota paper, we might see some cases reported here in the east, some thet we could look up easy. Anyhow, that man took only five bottles; most generally folks hev ter take ten or twenty. I'm thankful I bought a small-sized bottle, ter begin on. I shan't buy another, without I see signs er this one's a-workin' more. But there! Some folks is helped by medicine thet don't touch another person's case at all. Now p'r'aps this medicine might be good for you, Benjamin. There it is, over on the mantelpiece."

Uncle Ben arose mechanically and went over to inspect the omnipotent mixture. He read the label, in a low tone, with some difficulty, commenting as he did so (after the fashion of people in the seventies) upon the fineness of the type and the dimness of the ink. Then he remarked, turning to Mrs. Snow, "This ere stuff's good for dyspepsy, an' bronical troubles, an' kidney troubles, an' stomach complaint, an' asthmy, an' — an' a lot o' others, but I don't see nothin' abaout rheumatism."

Mrs. Snow arose, with considerable alacrity, and seized the bottle; she eyed it a moment, took out the stopper, smelt it and tasted it critically, and then exclaimed, with some disgust, "Well, I vum! Ef I hain't took the wrong medicine! I must 'a' got them bottles mixed."

Mixed they were, and no wonder; for the house contained scores and scores of bottles, empty or partly empty, which had been hopefully purchased by the aging woman, and disappointedly laid aside. The discovery of this mistake gave Mrs. Snow a little encouragement; her rheumatic old joints seemed not quite so stiff as when she thought they were resisting this new medicine, guaranteed to be "unusually powerful."

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, and went back to her work on the old dress.

"Anyhow," she resumed, after she had recovered her equanimity, "I don't set very much store by drugs and such-like. I always said I didn't. Why, I'd give more for a visit from ole Doctor Grout, if he was alive, than — than a whole 'pothecary shop."

The aforesaid "ole Doctor Grout" was one of those nondescript practitioners, known as "natural bone setters." His naturally clever mind being reënforced by the mystery of the magical art of "natural bone setting," he had long before gathered wealth, and in turn been gathered to his fathers, in a world where there are no bones to be set; and, later, his cleverly gained dollars had been industriously disseminated through the community, by three worthless sons. But the old man was religiously remembered, by the generation to which Mrs. Snow belonged, as a being of superhuman powers. "Why, I've often said," pursued Mrs. Snow, ripping steadily; "that I'd rather have a visit from ole Doctor Grout, even when he was deaf an' half blind, than a whole consultation of them upstart young fellows with college s'tiferkits. Oh, he was a powerful good doctor, he was." And the elderly woman paused and looked forth into vacancy, evidently seeing with the inner eye. "Why, he could look — look right through yer innards, an' tell jest what was the matter. Some folks used ter turn up their noses because he use' ter take a little nap sometimes; but, poor man, he was drove almost ter death."

Dr. Grout's "naps" had been, indeed, subjects of local gossip and controversy, during the last few years before he died. He was so dim of sight, in his latter days, that he could not have seen the vermilion patch on a Pawnee's cheek, much less the tint or spots on a juvenile scarlet-fever case or a case of measles; and, as to his hearing, he often went through the form of

listening to hearts, but the stertorous gasps of a hoisting engine would have been needed, to rouse his aural nerves into discriminating action. Then, too, regarding the much-discussed "naps," the truth was that the stout, turgid old man, coming in from the stimulating cold air, often did yield to the close air of the sick-room, and was known, repeatedly, to fall asleep at the bedside, with a patient's wrist in his podgy fingers. But such peculiarities were somehow connected, in the popular mind, with his other occult mental processes, and his patients usually did very well; at least if they did not, they were not likely to be in a state to tell about it.

So "ole Doctor Grout" had occupied a place in Mrs. Snow's life which patent medicines but partly filled; and the old lady sighed, and plied her ripping knife with assiduity. There was a long silence, and presently she said in a more cheerful tone, "Brought yer fiddle along, Benjamin?"

This was tacitly construed to mean that she would like to hear him play; so Uncle Ben began. A younger person, one with tact, might have chosen more inspiriting songs; but the old man was fond of the more seriously sentimental kind, and played "Old Dog Tray," and "The Harp that once thro' Tara's Halls," and "Robin Adair." The music came from the instrument sweetly, but not passionately; a tear dropped at intervals from the head that was bent over the old dress; but Uncle Ben never experienced this extreme of sentiment; he took his griefs and his memories seriously, as he did his commonplaces and even his joys; but he never felt the poignancy of the backward look and the vanishing past, as did the aged widow. Presently, as if noticing her depressed mood, he passed into more cheerful fields; he played "Drink to me only with thine eyes;" and "Fill the bumper fair," by Tom Moore.

Among these more hilarious tunes, his big, clumsy fingers made less successful headway; but his audience was not critical, and both the old people caught a little of the magic of the music. At length the widow brushed away, furtively, the moisture about her eyes, and remarked, "Lor', Benjamin, what good times I've hed in my day! Time was when I was considered the spryest girl in all the country. An' dancin', too! How I did love ter dance!"

Dancing was an unknown pastime to Uncle Ben. Many a dance had he supported with his fiddle, but the dancing itself he had never tried. The mention of it, however, recalled scenes which were agreeable. He fiddled away, growing redder and redder in the face. The perspiration rolled down his cheeks in great globules and rushing rivulets. "I b'lieve I'll ease up a bit," he remarked, and began to take off his coat; he followed this by removing his "dicky" and neckerchief. "Kinder hot work!" he added, and sat down again to his playing. He warmed up, considerably, on the familiar old dancing tunes, and Mrs. Snow's wrinkled face relaxed, and her foot tapped time to the music.

"I do believe, Benjamin," she began, in a hesitating way, "I really do believe — I — could step that dance — ef — well, I b'lieve I'll try." And she laid down her work and arose briskly.

At that moment some confused sounds were heard, outside the sitting-room door. Next, the door opened, and the specious, smiling countenance of Mr. Wilbur Blaney appeared in the doorway. Behind him appeared the disturbed face of the housemaid who had opened to him the street-door, and had vainly essayed to bar his progress into the sitting room. Blaney had on his most engaging grimace. He advanced, and bowed suavely. "I am very glad to see you, Mrs. Snow,"

he said, with a bow which he considered his very best. "And looking so well, I must say."

He merely glanced at Uncle Ben, whom he knew only by sight, and gave his entire attention to the now confused widow. She was thankful, a hundred fold, that she had not been actually caught in the frivolity of dancing. A sense of her age came back to her; the spell of the music had momentarily hidden the years; now they rolled back upon her, with their full weight. She felt, too, not a little annoyance, at this comparative stranger's coming straight into her sitting room. It was contrary to her directions. And she responded to the eager hand-grasp of the visitor, with perplexity and timidity.

"I recollect meeting you several times," said Blaney, seating himself in a chair, even before his hostess sat down; "I know you must remember me, Wilbur Blaney, Esq., of the North American Consolidated Caoutchouc Company." And he extended, between the tips of his fingers, a large, showy-looking business card.

The widow took it vaguely, but did not look at it. She simply sat, in a repressed way, while her visitor set his glib tongue in purposeful motion, and unfolded to her the unparalleled possibilities for wealth of this Company of which he was the secretary. "You see, my dear Mrs. Snow," said he, with fervor, "there is just now a rare opening for capital, in the rubber world. All the trades are using rubber very largely, and the demand exceeds the supply. With all this use of rubber for wheels, as, for instance, on bicycles and motor carriages, there is no such thing as meeting the demand. And, my dear Mrs. Snow, what is the result? I will tell you. Rubber is going up, going up."

Blaney pictured to his listener this process of levitation, by gracefully raising his hands into the air. Uncle Ben chanced, just then, to look across from the farther end

of the room, at the couple, and thought the visitor was pronouncing a benediction on his old friend; but the hands were quickly lowered, and the voluble tongue sped on in its persuasive speech. "Now, you see, the largest part of the rubber, or caoutchouc, as it should more properly be called, used in the industrial world, has been taken, heretofore, from the back forests of South America; but now, so great has been the demand, that even those forests have become denuded of their rubber trees, and there will soon be a scarcity of rubber in the market."

Blaney leaned over affectionately toward his victim, as he poured out this flood of talk. It was a situation in which he excelled; he really believed, at least for the moment, all that he expressed. He dearly loved to make large talk, on just such themes as this, for it opened up a vastness of area in which his pettiness expanded and rested itself. "Now, Mrs. Snow," he continued, holding her attention with his forefinger, but himself gazing across the room, "the world looks to America for its great staple products. And England and France and Germany and other great nations are stretching out their hands to us, for the fundamental necessaries of life. 'Give us wheat,' they say, and 'give us vegetables,' and 'give us rubber.' And what reply and response shall we give? Mrs. Snow, in a few years the answer and reply and response will be made and given by this great Consolidated Caoutchouc Company, of which I have the honor, the distinguished honor, to be the secretary. Listen, madam!" And Blaney's voice dropped into a whisper. "The great Consolidated Caoutchouc Company is buying up thousands of acres in Florida, and is preparing to plant rubber trees, and, ere long, will be able to give a complete and full and adequate response to all European demands."

He fixed his enthusiastic gaze on the aged woman, who seemed somewhat disconcerted, but showed no sign of a responsive enthusiasm. After pausing a moment, as if in rapt vision of the glorious future, Blaney continued, in his most confidential tone, "Now, Mrs. Snow, I thought that you might like to know about this rare investment, and I came around to give you such information as lay in my power. Any money which you put into this investment will be like — like bread cast upon the waters; it will return to you — buttered — after — not many, many days."

His manner was cheerful and sympathetic; and the old lady, although she had met his entrance with annoyance, was somewhat gratified at the sound of a friendly, masculine voice — a sound which was very rare within the walls of her home. She rallied a little from her discomfiture, and gave the talkative little man some intelligent attention. Then she asked one or two questions, and each question acted like an incautious foot-fall on an Alpine peak — it dislodged masses of verbiage — which threatened to overwhelm her. The name of the company seemed to trouble her, and she asked twice over about it. "Caoutchouc, Caoutchouc?" she pondered distrustfully. "What's that? Sounds kinder like a sneeze."

The agile Blaney met the random shot with skill. "Well, I can assure you, m'am, our company's not to be sneezed at." And then he seemed immensely delighted, and glanced around, hoping that the other occupant of the room perceived his clever wit. But Uncle Ben was impassively gazing out of the window, unmoved and expressionless, a spectacle of interest to sundry people on the street.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Snow," began the secretary again, in a soft, purring tone, "this is a rare oppor-

tunity to double and even treble money. It is a sure thing. You can take ten, twenty, or a hundred shares, ten dollars a share, and you will see your money come back fifty and a hundred fold."

It was a fact perceived by the wily secretary, that his victim was weakening; she was foreordained, by forty years of married life with the departed Snow, a masterful spirit, to weakly yield to masculine assertion and domination. "How — how — er — much did you say — the shares were?" she asked.

"Ten dollars, madam," responded Blaney, with dignity. "We thought at first of putting them at one hundred each; but our company is very broad and philanthropic, and decided to put them down to ten, in order that people who were not wealthy might be enabled to increase their slender property." This was a good place for him to stop; but Wilbur Blaney never knew the value of what orators call "the pause." And he had an instinct to fill every blank moment with words. The old lady was really very near the point of ignition, if he had allowed her to focus her thought a few moments longer upon her will. But he began to describe the grandeur of this rubber forest that was to be, in Florida, and when he paused, the widow asked vaguely, "How long — long — does it take them trees ter — ter grow up and — and bear the rubber?" Evidently she thought that boots and tires and coats were to be gathered, as finished products, from the branches.

"Oh, only a — " Blaney started to give the usual answer — "only a few years." But his quick senses told him that for such a listener and possible investor as this aged dame the term of "a few years" might seem inconveniently long; and he covered his sentence in a cough and then brought it out again in new form, "Only a very short time, my dear Mrs. Snow — a very,

very short time." Then he graphically pictured the fertility of the Florida soil, and the readiness, yes, the eagerness, of the rubber tree to rise into towering luxuriance — especially when planted and encouraged by the great North American Consolidated Caoutchouc Company. There was a luscious prodigality in Blaney's language, which made the old lady almost think that rubber was edible and very palatable; but she restrained her partly hypnotized faculties, and tried to look at the plain facts. Suddenly she bethought her of Uncle Ben. "Benjamin," she said, more in her normal tone of quiet assurance, "Benjamin, come over here!"

How much of the conversation the old man had heard cannot be stated, but he had gathered enough to understand what the visitor's errand was. He walked across the room, and Mrs. Snow said, "Benjamin, Mr. Blaney wants me ter invest in — in — something. What do you think about it?"

The agent of the Consolidated felt a natural chagrin, at having all his expansive dissertation on rubber and climate and shares suddenly condensed into the one vague word "something." But he recovered quickly, and advanced to the attack. He had nearly carried one redoubt, and, as in the Boer War, here was another revealed behind it. "How do you do?" he began, meeting the old man with his blandest manner. Then, as Uncle Ben volunteered nothing, he went on in his nervous, nimble way, repeating much of the "patter" which he had given to the widow. Through it all Uncle Ben maintained an inscrutable mien, looking straight at the secretary and uttering no word. There were several very convenient stopping-places, as there often are in long-winded preachers' discourses, but Blaney never knew how to make an exit; and he "stayed in," with increasing weariness to his listeners.

Finally, at one pause, longer than usual, the widow turned to Uncle Ben, "Benjamin, what do you think of this plan?"

The old man cleared his throat, and then delivered himself, briefly, but intelligibly, with precisely the candor he would have shown in setting a value on a cow or a horse. "Mis' Snow," he said, "I don't jest like the looks er this man." He addressed the widow as he spoke. Then he turned his great red honest face full on the now angry visitor, gazed thoughtfully at him for a moment, and, turning again toward his old friend, he said, "'Pears ter me 't he don't look jest honest."

Well! This was a pleasant sentence to fall on the Blaney ears, but the Blaney face and eyes and gestures all justified it. "I — I — don't understand, sir, what — what you mean," bristled he, with features working wrathfully. "I have never been so insulted in my life."

He was astonished and angry and dreadfully disappointed. He drew out his handkerchief, wiped his forehead, then his hands, and restored the fabric to his pocket. Mrs. Snow was somewhat surprised, and visibly trembled, but she said nothing. Both the old people remained silent and impassive. The natural reticence of age served them well; and Wilbur Blaney, after two or three futile attempts to repair the breach in his defences, made by these two destructive bomb-shells of Uncle Ben's, and after repressing a rising desire to strike the imperturbable old man to the floor, fumed and fretted his way to the door, and went out with a slam.

Mrs. Snow sank back into the chair from which she had partly risen. "Lor' sakes, Benjamin," she gasped, "I feel all upset." And her hands trembled so that she could hardly gain possession of her handkerchief.

"There, there, Elviry! Naow don't take on so!" said Uncle Ben, comfortingly. "It's all over, and you haint a-goin' ter be swindled." Whereupon fresh recollections of the harrowing interview came upon the widow, and she sobbed and rocked nervously.

The door opened once more, and the housemaid looked in to be assured that everything was right. Mrs. Snow caught sight of her, and at once lost her feelings of feebleness in more robust emotions of anger. "You hussy!" exclaimed the old lady, "what did you let that awful man in for? Haven't I told you, time and again, not to let in any of those agents and canvassers and such things? I have never—"

The housemaid was a Yankee girl, untrained and insolent, and she broke in upon her mistress with resonant tones that silenced that lady's thin, piping voice: "Well, I'd have yer know that he came right in himself. I told him that it was against orders, but he jest elbowed his way right in. The cheek of the man!" And the girl tossed her head, and stood with arms akimbo, with all the self-assertion of a falsely accused, free-born American citizen.

Mrs. Snow was convinced, and again took refuge in tears. The maid backed out, scolding Blaney, Mrs. Snow, and even herself. "O dear me, Benjamin!" sobbed the widow, after the maid departed, "I'm a poor lonely old woman, unprotected." And she cast an appealing look up at the wall, where hung the portrait of her departed husband, grim and resolute, even in paint and canvas, and much more so in the flesh.

Uncle Ben was about as skilful in comforting a weeping woman, as a cow would have been in caring for a deserted kitten or a bereft chicken; but his intentions were of the best, and when he tried to wipe the old dame's brown wrinkled forehead, with a piece of the

old black dress which she was "ripping," the clumsy kindness of the act made the widow laugh, and she caught Uncle Ben's big hairy paw, and clung to it with affection. "Benjamin," she said, "you're the only real friend I've got. All these folks in the house is time-servers. All of 'em after money, and all losin' sleep nights tryin' to think how they can get rid o' their work. Oh, Benjamin," she continued with increasing and pathetic earnestness, "there ain't no place in the world for an old woman like me. All the book agents and the committees a-chasin' after me, a-wantin' subscriptions and contributions — not one of 'em cares a pennyworth about me myself, but all with an eye for my money. The door-bell never rings, Benjamin, day in an' day out, without it's somebody that's tryin' to get somethin' out er me." And she rocked back and forth, overcome with her loneliness and helplessness.

Uncle Ben made no further attempt to quiet her, but stood, open-mouthed and mildly compassionate, waiting for the storm to subside. Suddenly a new idea came to the widow. "Benjamin," she said, speaking with quietness and resolution, "I'm a-goin' ter say something to you — something serious. I'm — I'm —" Here she broke off, and, looking fixedly at him a moment, she continued, "Benjamin, put on your vest and dicky again!"

Uncle Ben stared a moment, then obeyed. He presently stood, fully clothed, in "Mis'" Snow's presence. "Now, Benjamin, you're in a fit state of body and of mind, I hope, to hear the serious words I'm a-goin' ter say ter ye.

"Benjamin, I'm alone an' you're alone; we're both alone; an' — an' the Scripture says — says that it ain't good for folks ter be alone. Now I've 'bout made up my mind that you an' I'd better git married. I don't

really trust anybody in the world, Benjamin, 'xcept you; and —"

"Did — you — say — er — merried?" queried Uncle Ben, showing more genuine surprise in his mild, dim, blue eyes than had appeared there for years.

"I did, jest that," retorted the widow, defiantly, her strength and spirit reviving.

"All — right," assented Uncle Ben, submissively, and waited for further information.

"As I was a-sayin'," continued the widow, "I'm alone, an' you're alone; an' I'm hunted almost ter death, by agents and sich, an' I'm lorded it over by these upstart servant girls, an' if you was reg'larly my husband, Benjamin, you could protect me as you can't now."

"P'r'aps I could," agreed Uncle Ben, gently, yet hopefully.

"Yes, you certainly could. An' I want that hussy discharged, first of all; that one that talked back to me so, jest now. I've tried twice ter discharge her, but I somehow couldn't. I told her ter go, an' she jest laughed at me. O dear, dear!" and once more the poor, desolate, feeble old lady sank back in tears.

Uncle Ben cleared his throat and began, "I'd hev ter stay ter hum with the cats, nights, Elviry, I — I really would, yer know. But days, now, I could be over here most er the time."

His reflections were of an interrogative nature, and Mrs. Snow received them as such. "Yes, you could keep the cats, an' stay over ter your place nights; but if we was married, that would give yer power an' authority — ter — ter protect me. Oh, Benjamin, I'm — I'm a poor, lone old woman." And again sobs and tears.

Soon she roused herself, and went on with the sub-

ject. Evidently she had thought it out before, and this recent annoying episode had merely chemically precipitated in her mind what was before a strong solution. She had about half supported her old friend, during the past dozen years, and but few changes would be made in either of their lives by the union. "You must have some better clothes, Benjamin," she said thoughtfully, "an' I won't have yer a-carryin' that fiddle back an' forth in the streets; I'll get yer another one, an' yer can keep one in each place. Now — now, Benjamin, I feel a lot better already; an' I want you ter go an' get the papers, whatever is necessary, the — the license, I mean. An' if you'll have your friend, Mr. Freeman, come around here some day soon, we'll be married; yes, married. My heart's set on it."

So Uncle Ben, always having obeyed "Mis'" Snow, obeyed her in this particular, and agreed to go, the next day, to the city hall, and take out the required license.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PRICE OF BLOOD

"Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare."
—J. R. LOWELL.

So the two old people were made one — one in the sight of the law, as they had been one in trustfulness and sympathy for years past. The marriage caused no stir. There was no general interest aroused in it. One newspaper had three or four lines about it; but few readers had even heard about the names of the contracting parties; indeed, several persons who were familiar with the large figure of the old man, ruddy faced and white haired, knew him only as "Uncle Ben," and they did not recognize him under the dignified title of Benjamin Symmes Birch. In the household of Mrs. Snow a considerable flurry was stirred up in spinster breasts; but as the members of the household were apprised of the coming event, only twenty-four hours before it happened, the tide of emotion did not have time to reach a very great height. Mrs. Snow was naturally timid and defenceless, in the hands of the "help," and in this matter of a marriage she was especially sensitive. She did not quite dare to say the surprising words directly to anybody in the house; so she wrote a note to the cook, who was the leader in all household insubordination, and broke the news in this way. The cook at once became dignified and taciturn, but was not forgetful of her professional duties. She prepared, with skill

and despatch, a wedding-cake; but she made it in the largest possible baking-pan, giving it vast area, and on this expansive, snowy surface she wrote her virtuous protest. She inscribed, in that pink composition of liquid sweetness, known more intimately in the kitchen than in the library, the number "74," this being the age of the widow, to the best of the cook's knowledge.

Mr. Freeman came to the house one afternoon, the two old people were married, and then the three returned, each to his usual routine of life: Mrs. Birch to her sewing and knitting, Uncle Ben to his chores and cats, and Mr. Freeman to his multifarious duties. The busy clergyman had been somewhat surprised, at learning about the intended marriage, but now that it was over, it seemed not a bad plan after all; moreover Mr. Freeman was so deeply absorbed, at this time, in certain labor-union troubles, that he had little attention to give to other affairs. The masons of the city had struck, in a body, and after a week's idleness had gone back to work; and it was understood that the minister of the chapel on the North Side had been an effective force in bringing about this result.

During the several years in which Freeman had shared the life of this quarter of the city, he had steadily gained in influence among all classes. There was a simplicity about him which made him easy to get at, and made his words carry conviction. He wore no clerical costume whatever, and did not arouse that idle transient interest, which is aroused in work like his by persons who affect a peculiar garb. Such an interest is useful up to a certain point; but in the end it precludes that mutual confidence, which can exist between two human beings, only as each feels the resemblances that unite, and forgets the differences which tend to keep asunder.

Beyond this, Lawrence had a real interest in sociological matters. His name was becoming a familiar one, in the lists of contributors to economic journals, and he was frequently invited to address conventions and associations, on economic and sociological topics. This side of his life was but little known to the rank and file of the workmen, and to but few of their leaders; but so just and intelligent a character as his very favorably interested such men in overalls as met him. He had attended some of their meetings, and they naturally turned to him, after their week's idleness and anxiety, and he met a large committee and conferred with them.

Exactly how that conference went on, nobody clearly knew. Reporters were not allowed to be present, and the union leaders did not care to talk, especially as they yielded their contention, and ordered the various branches of the union to return to work.

Lawrence was in Mr. Marshall's counting-room, not long after, and the mill-owner asked him a few questions about the matter. "I don't wish to pry into any secrets," he began good-naturedly, yet as always, truthfully, "but from what I hear, you knew more about the ending of that strike than most of us did."

"Oh, there is no secret about it," responded Lawrence, freely. "I talked the matter over, with some of the leaders, and they saw that their best interests lay in resuming work."

"Whether it was for their interest or not," remarked Mr. Marshall, "it was certainly greatly for the interest of Leon Carsten and Company. You knew, of course, just how bad a fix Carsten was in?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Lawrence. "All that side of it was fully understood by the labor unions. They were partly led by the fact of his extensive building operations to choose the time they did."

"Well, it meant a great many thousands of dollars to Carsten," remarked Mr. Marshall. "His shops are well along toward completion now, and he will be ready to meet the contracts which he made with those St. Louis firms. He was anxious about it, I could see; although he is a man who affects indifference, and always seems to have unlimited resources. On the whole I am glad that the matter resulted so satisfactorily. I can't help wondering, though, how you dared to give those fellows such advice as I am told you gave. My experience has been that they are headstrong, and not very open to instruction of any sort."

"It is one of the compensations of my peculiar position," said Lawrence, with satisfaction, "that I can talk freely to any and all classes. I belong to no class, industrially, and these men know it. I am especially glad of this settling of the strike, because it helps maintain my cherished theory about the true powers of the religious teacher of our day, and the proper scope of church influence."

"Whatever your theory," remarked Mr. Marshall, in a friendly tone, "I can safely assert beforehand that it will not be one that I have heard from the present preacher at Emmanuel Church. He never deals with theories, not he; he deals in facts, or rather in stories about facts, although I am bound to say to his credit that he has been preaching less sensationally and more sensibly of late. We are all coming to think that Mrs. Guthrie is at the bottom of it."

Lawrence nodded, in a sympathetic way. He had arrived at the same conclusion. But he had wished for some time to speak of this unfolding theory of his about churches, and now was come a good opportunity. "I state my view in this way," said he. "I believe that the Christian churches are falling into decay and

extinction, because they are wedded to the old views of Christianity, which were negative, in ideas and practices; and the demand of this age is for something positive, in human activity, industrial, scientific, or moral. Take the ideal of Jesus which has been held up by the Christian church during eighteen centuries. It was established by the application of the ancient 'Messianic Prophecies,' so called, to the person of Jesus; and it emphasizes the patience and humility of the Master, at the expense of the more positive and initiative powers which he unquestionably possessed. The church has accepted the simile of the patient sheep, 'dumb before her shearers,' and has thought of him solely as 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' The artists of the Christian church have unconsciously accepted this partial view of the Master, and have still further fixed the negative ideal of his character, by their pictures of scourging and crucifixion."

As Lawrence paused, Mr. Marshall took up his idea with acuteness. "That way of putting it explains to me what I felt when I saw the Passion Play of Ober-Ammergau. You know we all went over, four years ago. I felt, as I saw that wonderful drama, that the character of 'Christus' was disappointing; but I didn't know just why I felt so. I see now that the Passion Play portrayed only one-half of the character of Jesus."

"Yes, that is what the name signifies. Passion means endurance of ills, sufferings; and what the public sees portrayed at Ober-Ammergau is what the world has seen in the Christ Ideal, these many centuries; namely, the negative, patient, suffering Jesus. Now the records of the great prophet's life are all too meagre, but they give ample indications of a very active, positive, even dominating spirit. The attitude of Jesus toward the money-changers in the temple, and toward the hard-

ened Pharisees, was threatening and denunciatory; and his entire mission was earnest, though sympathetic, aggressive, though loving."

"I am not sure," suggested Mr. Marshall, tentatively, "but doesn't Tolstoï, the Russian writer, take different ground on the matter?"

"Yes, he does," assented Lawrence, promptly. "He has a theory of non-resistance, which he thinks he deduces from the life and teachings of Jesus; but I believe he has failed to grasp the deeper meaning of that profound life in Palestine. I believe that Jesus taught and practised a kind of holy retaliation — the return of love for hate; the response of kindness to injury. To remain passive, submissive, under insult and injury, is only going halfway toward the goal which Jesus pointed out. We must go far beyond that, as Jesus himself did, and return on him who steals from us, or in any way harms us, pity and love. That is positive Christianity, and is far harder and higher to attain, than submission, and avoidance of positive sinfulness."

Mr. Marshall shook his head doubtingly, yet with a smile. "I'm afraid," said he, "that such doctrines are too soft and pulpy for practical life to-day. I think we shall need jails and prisons a good while yet."

"So do I think so," argued Lawrence, with warmth. "I do not urge their demolition, nor do I urge the banishing of restraints and penalties for sin and crime. I urge, simply, that love and tenderness must be behind such reformatory systems, or they fall short of Christ's injunctions. A human parent is often obliged to correct his child, and even to cause him pain of some kind; but he does all in love and hope. However," he continued more quietly, "that was not the exact phase of this theory of a positive Christianity which I started to

unfold. I am concerned about the obvious decay and decrepitude of the churches; and I believe, as I have said, that this has come about because the churches unconsciously uphold and practise, as organizations, the negative virtues of Christianity. The world never showed as much altruistic zeal as to-day, but that zeal and energy is developed and applied, I regret to say, largely outside the organized religious bodies. The churches urge lessons of patience and endurance, and avoidance of sin; but they must swing around into the larger orbit, and urge an aggressive warfare against sin and disease and misery, in all their hideous forms."

"This is all somewhat novel to me, I must admit," remarked the mill-owner. "I never thought of these matters in this way before, yet what you say, Mr. Freeman, has an air of good sense about it."

"I do believe in it," continued Lawrence, speaking rapidly and earnestly. "Ministers and church members are principally occupied — so far as sin is concerned — with keeping away from it; whereas they ought to keep as close to it, in every form, as they can — close to it, attacking and exterminating it. What is worse, there is a very general nervousness and morbid sensitiveness in the churches, about being misunderstood, and being talked about, and being 'written up' in the newspapers. To avoid publicity and to shun being railed at by the press — that is a controlling, enslaving principle of church members, and is a formidable barrier to the true mission of the church to-day. Why, I would like to see the whole basis of sentiment and action so changed, that the churches would carry on newspapers which should be scrupulously exact and truthful in all departments, and theatres and lecture-courses also. These might be made powerful factors for education in at least morals, and even, with care and delicacy, in

things spiritual. Note also the reform committees and investigation boards in our cities! What better ground for these and similar enterprises to spring out of than the churches! And men, not women, in the churches, should lead in doing these things. I hope—"

At this moment Freeman was interrupted by a man who came into the counting-room. "Oh, it's Mr. Carsten," exclaimed Mr. Marshall, rising. "I have a little business with him. Don't go, Mr. Freeman. I'll introduce you, and then I will take him into the inner office. We'll be out in a few moments. I want you to meet him," and he added in a still lower tone, "and then you may tell me what you think of him."

Freeman was introduced, and looked the newcomer over with much interest. Carsten, for his part, bent his piercing black eyes upon the clergyman, with that penetrating and even insolent stare with which he was accustomed to meet and dominate new people. The man was well known to Freeman, by reputation, both on the industrial and the social side. The labor-union leaders had given no very flattering picture of him, in his business dealings, and socially the man occupied a peculiar position in the community. He was a man of medium height, with broad shoulders and well-poised head, which, when he was seated, led one to expect a tall, well-modelled figure; but, standing, he was seen to be rather short in the legs, and therefore always seemed disproportioned. He was black haired, swarthy in complexion, with aquiline nose, and piercing black eyes set closely together. Mentally he was quick, decisive, resourceful, and clever in epigrammatic sayings and in stinging repartee. He was self-reliant and lawless, socially, and took delight in defying the customs and conventions of society. Everybody feared his sharp tongue and dreaded his wit and ridicule. He

had led a free life, even to the extent of profligacy; and there were many stories afloat in society regarding his libertine youth. Now that he was beyond middle life, he lived more quietly; but his house, where he entertained frequently, had been often the scene of over-indulgence, and he was said to find amusement in urging young people to excess in drinking, and in language which had brought shame to them afterwards and horror to the hearts of their parents. He was a member of a church which privately disapproved him, but publicly accepted his allegiance and his considerable gifts and his shrewd counsel. He was a man after the type of the Greek profligate, Alcibiades, who insulted and maltreated his inferiors on the streets, and healed their wounded feelings by a largess of gold. Carsten delighted in defying public opinion, and then bribing it with unexpected gifts of a fountain, or books to the library, or a stained window for a church.

All this was well known to Freeman, and he had long felt that the brilliant, dissolute man was a baneful influence in the community. He had been influenced in advising the labor leaders to resume work, not at all by any friendliness for Carsten; on the contrary, his sympathy was very slight toward the factory-owner; but the best interests of the working-men, in the long run, had seemed to the clergyman to suggest temporary concessions. Whether or not Carsten knew the part he had played in bringing about the close of the strike, Freeman was not sure. Certainly there was no sign of it in the factory-owner's cold, piercing glance, as the two shook hands.

Lawrence seated himself in his chair again, as Mr. Marshall led his visitor into the inner office; and he now took up the daily newspaper. Engaged in this reading, a quarter of an hour passed; and the inner

office door opened and the two manufacturers came out. A few final words were exchanged between them, and Carsten started to go out upon the street. He took hold of the door-knob, paused, and returned to the desk near Lawrence. The clergyman's back was turned, and he did not see what Carsten was doing. "Mr. Freeman," spoke the factory-owner, in his crisp and almost contemptuous way; and Lawrence arose and turned toward him.

"There's a check for your gospel-mill, if you want it," continued Carsten. "'Tisn't much, only a hundred dollars, but perhaps you can use it to advantage. Distribute Bibles, or buy catechisms, or some such damned nonsense as that, I suppose! Anyhow, the money's yours." And he proceeded to put back his check-book into his pocket.

There was the same insulting tone of contempt, in his voice, with which he usually accompanied his bestowal of gifts. He was a handsome man, and the cut of his mustache and imperial gave his cold smile, at these moments, a cynical flavor which was Mephistophelian. He stood waiting, a moment, for some response from the clergyman. Mr. Marshall also stood near, and something in Lawrence's face made the mill-owner drum nervously on the edge of the desk. The clerk, across the office, lifted furtive glances of interest over the edge of the ponderous ledger.

Lawrence's face grew very rigid, his legs stiffened, and he gazed straight into the cynical face before him. The scene was a trying one for him. He needed the money, not for such purposes as Carsten had insolently suggested, but to put in benches and other fittings, for a class in manual training. There lay the check, on the desk, where the manufacturer had dropped it, not even deigning to hand it to the clergyman. It lay

there — so it seemed to Lawrence — like a bone thrown to a dog; and the hand that had drawn it, was the hand that had enticed young souls to perdition and had laughed at their fall; the name on the bit of paper was a name feared (but abhorred in secret) by all respectable people in the community.

Carsten was a very keen man; and he thought he knew perfectly well what the struggle was, that held the clergyman in his valley of indecision. He thought he knew it, and he was amused at it, had seen similar situations before, and had always seen one outcome — the half-ashamed, apologetic acceptance of the gift. This kind of outcome was what he always relished, as if he were looking on at a stage drama. He stood there, silently waiting for the clergyman to reach his decision, confident that the decision would be capitulation. His smile deepened in sardonic intensity. He waited.

"Mr. Carsten," began Freeman. He spoke very slowly. He wished to say exactly the right words. He paused, because he was instinctively about to express formal thanks for the offer; but he omitted that clause. "Mr. Carsten, I do not wish to take your check. I am sorry that you have offered it. I — I — because your offer puts me under the painful necessity of — declining it."

His slight hesitation in speech was misconstrued by Carsten, but Mr. Marshall knew him better, and foresaw an unpleasant scene. "There, there!" responded the factory-owner, with a deprecatory gesture, and with a mocking smile playing about the corners of his mouth, "pocket the dirty stuff! It's filthy lucre, I know, but we fellows have to hustle like the devil to get it."

As he spoke, he began moving toward the door. He considered the gift accepted, and cared not to waste more time. Suddenly and sharply rang out the words,

"Mr. Carsten!" It was Freeman's voice, clear, incisive. "I shall not take your check. If you leave it, it still remains yours. Mr. Marshall will doubtless see that it is returned to you." With this unmistakable declination, Freeman quietly sat down in the chair, and took up his paper with all the indifference he could assume.

Carsten's face underwent a transformation. This was an outcome of the scene which he had not anticipated. Mr. Marshall did not like to look directly at him, for he was a man who loved peace and kindliness, and had a horror of strife. The clerk, however, from over the edge of the ledger, could see Carsten's under lip get between his white, wolf-like teeth, and his long, sinewy, be-ringed fingers clench together tightly. But his voice was steady, as he came across to Lawrence, and, gazing down at him, asked, "And why do you decline my money, may I ask?"

Lawrence returned his look with one no less self-contained; then he rose from his chair, for there was a lurking threat in the man's eyes that boded ill. The two faced each other, a yard or two apart. Lawrence, now that the situation was avowedly a battle, all fencing being laid aside, felt the substratum of his nature stirred, and knew again the joy, the stern joy, of defying iniquity and condemning a vicious life. "Mr. Carsten," he replied, with courtesy but with firmness and entire self-reliance, "I do not wish for your money; that is enough for me to say."

The swarthy face before him worked nervously. Carsten was not used to this kind of situation. His pride was piqued and his will defied. "See here!" he exclaimed, "I ask you a plain question. I want a plain answer. Why do you refuse my money? Isn't it good money?"

The wilful profligate knew well the ground of the

minister's refusal. But he was a bold spirit, and dared attack almost any stronghold. Many a time his overbearing manner and his threatening eyes had made an adversary retreat, even after offering temporary resistance. But this time his opponent had an amount of iron in his blood, that precluded any such outcome. The line of Freeman's dark, dense eyebrows seemed to straighten and stiffen, and the scar on the side of his square forehead became livid. "Mr. Carsten, I say again that I do not wish for your money. And since you demand my reason for my attitude, I will give it. I wish no assistance, in my work of lifting men and women out of sin and degradation, from a man who has done so much to lead men and women down into those conditions."

Certainly the words were plain enough. There was no mistaking the clergyman's meaning, and the factory-owner caught his breath, despite all his self-possession, under the lash; for he had not listened to such plain speech, for years. His experience was all the other way. Nobody had dared, for the last twenty years of his prosperous, dictatorial career, to speak such words to him. The clerk, over the edge of the ledger, saw his shoulders heave, and knew that at any moment a blow might be delivered. Carsten stood a moment, his head slightly inclined forward, his eyes blazing with wrath, his face a vortex of malignant fury. Then he shook himself, like a dog coming out of the water, and hissed, "You damned psalm-singing — "

"Mr. Marshall," interrupted Freeman, in a strong, resonant tone that had plenty of suggestive vibration in it, "Mr. Marshall," — and he kept his deep-set eyes fastened on the two scintillatory eyeballs in front of him, —"I do not wish to be the cause of any disgraceful scene in your office. I shall be obliged to bid you good

morning." And he moved slowly backward and away, still keeping his gaze on the furious face in front of him, as a lion-tamer holds the gaze of a savage beast, when about to leave the cage.

Carsten's eyes followed the clergyman, in every movement he made, and not until the outer door closed, did he seem to come to himself. Then his rigidity of poise slackened gradually, he mechanically ran his fingers over his mustache and imperial, then smoothed his hair, and acted like a man recovering from a disorderly encounter with fists. Indeed, he could hardly have sworn that he had not actually come to blows with his hated antagonist. In his will, in his heart, there had been overwhelming hate, and the desire to crush. His mental disorder could have been no greater, if blows had actually been reached. He saw that he had been defied and really put to defeat; and the clerk heard him mutter a stream of profanity, which seemed to scorch the air that was touched by it.

Mr. Marshall was himself in a highly agitated frame of mind; but his natural resource, in all times of pressure, was silence and self-repression. Accordingly he ventured no soothing remark, but quietly stepped behind his desk and began sorting some papers which lay there. The clerk across the room gave no sign of life, except when he turned a ledger leaf, and this act he performed as if he were on picket-duty, under the enemy's sharp-shooting fire.

Presently Carsten walked toward the door, stopped, walked back to the desk, whereon lay his unaccepted check, took the unoffending piece of paper, as if it had been a venomous insect or reptile, and tore it into minute shreds. Then he walked rapidly, and with his usual bold stride, across to the outer door, and, without a word to anybody, went out.

CHAPTER XX

BARRIERS BURNED AWAY

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." — I Corinthians iii. 15.

Ronald Carnaquay was conscious, now, that his affections were seriously twined about Adeline Guthrie. He had thought about her by that name for some time. He had not dared to call her "Adeline," openly, but he thrilled when he heard any of her old and intimate friends speak of her in that familiar way. He even resented its use by some; and he chafed inwardly, because they could speak of her lightly, often in so intimate a fashion, and he still be compelled to continue calling her, respectfully and distantly, "Mrs. Guthrie."

His congregation also knew, in a general way, that he was undergoing some deep, mental experience, but only a few had any inkling of its exact nature. There were various signs of this new condition of things, in the clergyman's life. In the first place, as we have already seen, the cleverer portion of the parish noticed a marked change in the material of which his sermons were made up. There was, as Mr. Marshall expressed it, "more substance" in them, and a wider range of reference to the best authors. In addition to this change, there was another in his style of delivery; he was more repressed and moderate in his ways of expression; and many people felt, rather than consciously noted, that there was less self-assurance in the man. He was less assertive and confident; in truth, he had lost, in a measure, the

poise of good nature and self-confidence, which had made him attractive in the pulpit. For although such poise may be pushed so far as to become offensive in a speaker, he must always possess a considerable amount of it, in order to make his listeners lean upon him and his words, with confidence.

This change was a positive loss of power to him, and of pleasure to many in his congregation, but in another way there was a gain. He was more personal in his preaching, seemed to take more thought of people and circumstances where hilarity and jollity were not the end and aim of life; also in his prayers there crept in more and more a spirit of longing and heart-hunger, which made them voice more intimately the words of serious and earnest people in the congregation.

Thus, in various ways, to the really acute observer, Ronald Carnaquay was distinctly a different person from what he had been when he came to Emmanuel Church. As to his own recognition of his altered state of mind, he was fairly conscious of it. He had sought Mrs. Guthrie's companionship, sedulously, had been lifted and educated by it, and knew now that she was dearer to him than all else in the world. Of course there was only one way out of it all. He must win her love, and with that end consciously in mind, he consulted her wishes in every possible way, paid her many little attentions, and hoped that she was not wholly unresponsive. If he had felt sure that she would listen to him favorably, he would have offered himself to her, at the first opportunity; but once or twice when he had been alone with her, and their conversation had drifted into favorable situations for such an avowal, the sensitive woman had broken through the narrowing circle which he was weaving about her, and had escaped into the most trivial commonplaces. Once when he was con-

fiding in her his distaste for the blind, uncritical approval of the congregation at large, he had been led by a sympathetic light in her eyes to exclaim, "My dear Mrs. Guthrie, there is one whom I care more and more to please, one whose approval I care more to deserve, than all the fulsome flattery of the multitude."

At this point his listener's eyes began to twinkle with mischief, and she responded, "Yes! ah, yes! You mean the approval—of God. That is the right attitude of mind, Dr. Carnaquay, for every true minister. I am glad you have come to that point."

Thus his plan fell completely through, for that day. And thus it was on several occasions. The charming widow was capricious as a butterfly, and although he felt sure, at times, that she cared at least a little for him, he was a cautious man, and a vain man (as she had often told him), and he did not dare or choose to risk his *amour-propre* in one concise declaration.

She, on her part, was tolerably certain of the condition he was in. He sent her flowers — not always in the best æsthetic grouping, but he sent them in profusion. These she had accepted graciously; then had come little presents which at first she had refused, with polite phrases. Later she had accepted, although with much perturbation and self-distrust, several copies of books which he had sent to her. She knew her own mind, up to this point only — that he was much less distasteful to her than formerly; and she had even passed from amusing herself by teasing him and piquing his vanity, to many serious discussions of various subjects. Less and less he posed, in his professional, oracular, condescending way, when they were alone. She was often struck by the difference between his manner, when she formed one of a group about him, and his manner when they two were alone together. There was humility in his

attitude, when talking with her alone, which few other people ever saw; and at times he forgot his usual stilted style of speech, and she felt rather sure that she saw his real character, and felt the heart-beat of a genuine, earnest nature and purpose. But again and again she said to herself that he was much better as a man than as a minister; and her real opposition and rebellion to his manifest attentions was because of his profession, so little did he fill out her ideal of that lofty life of service and sympathy.

Thus matters stood between them, and had so stood for months. Mrs. Guthrie kept up her work at the chapel on the North Side, but did not visit the Freemans, in their home, nearly so much as formerly. She was always in her pew, at morning service in Emmanuel Church, and continued to instruct the class in Sunday-school. Carnaquay, on his part, struggled along, and now had about given up his visits and calls, at Miss Metcalf's stately mansion. A slowly increasing coolness was come between them. Miss Metcalf rarely appeared at church, and rumor had it that she was seen frequently in the congregation of the rival church, around the corner from Emmanuel Church.

What the end of all this might have been, cannot be confidently stated, had not dear, clumsy-minded Matilda Fifield stumbled into the arena, and brought matters much nearer a conclusion. It happened in this way: Matilda was on a committee, at the church, to direct a "salad supper," or a "turkey dinner," or something of that sort, and she had entered upon her duties with delirious inconsequence. Had it not been for the clear head of Mrs. Bellaire, whom she had asked to assist her, there would have been little progress made. It was the forenoon of the day appointed for the festivity, and Matilda was at the church, busy in the kitchen, red in

face, and dishevelled as to hair. Mrs. Bellaire drove over with her husband, and brought several articles of food. With difficulty Mrs. Bellaire restrained her energetic, self-reliant husband from removing his coat and waistcoat, and chopping wood and making the fire in the range of the well-equipped church kitchen. Better, perhaps, if her recently developed niceties and proprieties had allowed the proceeding, for the worthy plumber knew almost as much about ranges as he did about water-pipes and sewer-traps. However, he was restrained, and departed, and the culinary work went forward, Matilda's tongue, of course, outstripping her hands in activity.

Presently Mrs. Bellaire went away also, to "solicit" some celery and olives from a grocer down the street. The course of subsequent events, as nearly as they could be later inferred, from the demoralized Matilda's narration, was something like this: The ineffective creature started her range fire, and it went out; then she piled the charred débris from the range into a coal scuttle, carried it into the cellar, emptied it out, and carried back to the kitchen a new supply of kindling wood and shavings. It must have been that the scatter-brained woman did not wholly extinguish the smoking waste-stuff, taken from the range; in any event, she made a new fire in the range, and this time with success. And she went on with her preparations for the "turkey dinner," with great satisfaction to herself, and with pleasurable anticipations of the words of approval which she would receive, in the evening, from the various skilled housewives of the parish, and possibly from the authoritative Miss Metcalf, — if that lady happened to be in a gracious mood.

But no such deserved success was to crown her efforts. As she trotted amiably and contentedly about

the kitchen, she became aware of an increasing confusion of noise, in the street outside. She even recognized vaguely the cry, "Fire!" and she thought she would presently step to the side door, near at hand, and see what the matter was. The noise increased, the cries grew louder, and Matilda, always blessed with a good share of curiosity, went over to the door, with a cloth tied over her hair and a half-cut-up turkey in her hand. Opening the door, she saw men and boys running about in the street, and many of them were shouting "Fire!" Several, as they saw her appear in the doorway, stopped and stared, then they shouted "Fire!" louder than ever, and seemed to shout it directly at her. She stood stupidly staring at them, and they ran toward her. "Fire! Fire!" they shouted.

"Where? Where — where is it?" she responded, vacantly.

"The church!" cried a score of voices; and she was swept aside by a crowd of excited firemen, who rushed in, passed quickly through the kitchen and the vestry, and flung open the door of the auditorium of the church; through the keyhole and cracks of the door tiny whirls of smoke were streaming, and, as the door itself swung back, a great volume of dense smoke poured out, and spread through the vestry and adjoining rooms.

Needless to say that poor Matilda, having thus "builded better than she knew," was hurriedly hustled out of the place, and made her way to a position of safety, from which she watched the progress of the flames, with anxiety and increasing remorse.

The fire undoubtedly had started from the ashes and smouldering kindlings, emptied out into the cellar near some inflammable material. At any rate, there had been no other fire in the church, for several days, and the

conflagration had worked up from the cellar, at the front of the church, between the partitions, and then had burst out through the roof.

There was the usual uproar, throughout the streets, as fire-engines and hook-and-ladder apparatus came galloping to the scene of action. There were some efforts made at saving movable articles in the church, and the pulpit Bible and a few hymn-books were carried out, also a few pictures from the vestry. But, from the first, the chief engineer saw that the church was doomed, so generally had the flames spread through the front of the building and throughout the garret or unfinished loft overhead. He therefore directed his attention to saving, if possible, the chapel or vestry, which was a part of the church building, although under a separate roof. Also, there were several adjacent buildings which were very inflammable, and great care was needed to protect them.

Among the first hundred persons who arrived, was Carnaquay; he heard the alarm sounded, and recognized the number of the box near Emmanuel Church. So soon as he reached the church, he saw that there was no saving it; and he went around to the rear, and entered the vestry, and then looked into the auditorium. It made his heart beat with excitement, to see the large space, where he had so often preached, now filled with smoke, and to know that in an hour the great structure would be a mass of smouldering ruins. As yet the fire had not burst through into the auditorium, but its roaring beyond the partition wall and overhead was very apparent. He stood a moment in the doorway, holding the door open, when one of the firemen who knew him said to him, "Better shut the door, Dr. Carnaquay, and keep the draught away from the flames!"

So Carnaquay cast one lingering, regretful glance

around, saw dimly his pulpit, and the gleam of the great organ-pipes above, as they waited, like a platoon of soldiers, to meet their doom, then stepped back and shut the door. For a few minutes he occupied himself in searching out and removing certain valuables in the vestry and in the study adjoining; then he noticed a woman enter the outer door and come toward the large door leading into the church. A fireman near by stepped over and ordered her back. She replied, and as her face turned toward the clergyman, he was startled at recognizing Mrs. Guthrie.

Immediately he hurried toward her, and exclaimed, "My dear Mrs. Guthrie, you must not come in here. You run great risks in doing so."

He saw that her countenance had an expression of great determination upon it, and her voice, as she recognized him, was full of suppressed feeling. "I must go into the church, Dr. Carnaquay. I must go and I shall. There is a Bible in my pew, which I will not have burned up;" and she took firm hold of the handle of the door leading into the church.

"But I beg that you won't think of such a thing," exclaimed Carnaquay, now alarmed at the situation; for he knew her determined nature.

"Yes, but I will!" she cried, with a toss of her head, and pulled open the door.

The clergyman remonstrated, but in vain. He caught her by the arm, and she drew away with an imperious gesture. "I will get that book!" she cried. "It is very dear to me. My — my — Dr. Guthrie gave it to me;" and she sprang through the doorway, before he could stop her.

He followed, feeling an anxiety and anger and alarm, greater than he had ever known before. The smoke was now less dense in the great room, for the reason

that several windows above had yielded to the fire, had fallen out, and the smoke found vent through those apertures. This change was favorable to her daring, wilful purpose; but with it had come another change, which was fraught with peril. Gleams of fire could be distinguished at several points overhead, as the devouring element ate its way downward through the floor of the garret. Carnaquay could easily see Mrs. Guthrie, picking her way along the side aisle, and he leaped after her. At least he would share the peril with her, and help bring the adventure to a speedy termination. In another moment his long strides brought him beside her, and together they hurried down the aisle, which was littered with cushions and books and footstools, where hasty, half-hearted rescuers had left them. As the two reached the corner where was the Guthrie pew, a loud crash behind them made the clergyman turn his head; and he could not repress an exclamation of alarm, as he saw that a section of the ceiling had fallen into the body of the church; and, looking up, he saw and heard the roaring flames, now revealed in all their fury. "Quick, now! quick!" he cried. "Which pew is it?" and he saw the dark-gowned, graceful form that he loved so well, glide into one of the pews at his right. In a tumult of impatience he waited — it was only a few seconds, but it seemed as many long minutes — as Mrs. Guthrie pulled over the cushions and scattered books. Then she caught up a little volume, pressed it instinctively to her breast, and came out.

He turned, and, with his sharp eyes and quickened judgment, saw that they could not return as they had come. Masses of flaming material were now dropping into the aisle along which they had passed, and he wheeled about, saying in a voice of command which was

audible above the crashing and roaring, "Come! this way!"

As he did so, leading the way along the left aisle, he caught instinctively at her hand, to assist her; but she drew it back, and motioned for him to proceed. Indeed, her voice could hardly have been heard, amid the uproar.

At this moment, the tower or cupola of the rotunda gave way, its supports having yielded to the flames, and came hurtling, booming down, into the middle of the church, sending a cloud of smoke and dust and sparks in every direction. With a glance back at her, he led the way along the aisle, fearful each moment lest the part of the ceiling over their heads should come crashing down, or that some flaming brand should fall upon her and ignite her clothing. As for himself, he had no thought of personal peril. His love for that lithe, daring, determined woman, following him, was too great to leave room for self-anxiety. He strode on, each moment glancing behind, and occasionally stooping and lifting aside some obstructing débris. Close upon him she came, her face white, her lips compressed, one hand holding up her skirt and the other clutching tightly the little volume at her breast.

Oh, it seemed a mile — the length of the church! The smoke was not dense now, and the reason for it was all too evident when they reached the door. But just before this point was gained, a window over their heads gave way and came toppling down — heavy frame and all — and dashed itself into fragments among the pews beside them. Pieces of shattered glass smote them in the face. The din was terrible. The shock was too great for feminine nerves; and Carnaquay, whose eyes were everywhere, saw Mrs. Guthrie totter and begin to sink toward the floor. "Adeline! Adeline!" he gasped,

and in an instant had her in his arms, and she not able longer to resist or resent.

He caught the little book, innocent cause of all this strain and peril, and hastily thrust it into his pocket. Then he put his strong arms about her, and gathered her up as if she had been a baby. Even in that moment of impending danger he could not help pressing his lips to her broad white forehead, in one passionate kiss. Then he strode, like a viking, across the few intervening yards of distance, and laid hold of the door-knob.

He turned the handle, and thought to easily open the door and bear his precious burden out into safety; but the door resisted his push. The knob turned, but the door would not yield. A pang of fear shot through him. Could it be locked? Then he saw what was the difficulty. By the very slight yielding which the great door gave to his push, he perceived that it was not locked, and he understood, with a quick comprehension of the situation, that the door was thus held firmly closed by reason of the great pressure of air which sought to pour into the building to supply the vacuum caused by the ascending column of heated air and flames. Firemen often encounter this phenomenon.

For a moment Carnaquay paused, and an exclamation of horror burst from his lips. To be shut in, like rats in a trap! To have death come, when escape was so near and life so dear — this was more than he could bear. Then all his resolution came to him, and his resourceful nature saved them both. There was little time for deliberation. He lowered the limp form of her whom he loved, to the floor, resting her gently against the wall. Then like a Titan he leaped over to the platform, where he had so often stood and held great congregations silent and spell-bound. Oh, how far away all that life seemed, amid the hell of this fiery furnace!

Mounting the platform at a bound, he caught up one of the massive pulpit chairs, and sprang with it, as if it had been a feather, back through the hail of blazing embers, to the door. He brandished it in his powerful arms, and smote the panels of the door. They cracked. Again and again he smote, and they splintered and gave away. In a fury of passion he smashed panels and framework, and the cool stream of air, pouring through, seemed like a current of icy water on his flaming face.

Again he seized the handle of the now wrecked door, and it yielded, as he pushed. Then, with a stifled prayer of thankfulness, — one of the few real prayers he had ever known how to utter, — he turned toward his fair burden, now weakly trying to rise. "Adeline, Adeline," he murmured in her ear, as he once more caught up her unresisting form to his breast. "Thank God, you are safe!" and he now easily pushed wide open the great wrecked door, and carried her out, and she silently wept on his shoulder, and spoke no word.

CHAPTER XXI

"TILL DEATH US DO PART"

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." — Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

THE same day that brought together, into confessed heart relationships, the two persons whose paths had been so long converging, beheld also the sundering of two lives, which had quietly reached a unity of silent sympathy, rarely surpassed by human wills, amid human habits of daily life. On the afternoon of the day that saw Emmanuel Church — first being kindled by Matilda Fifield's clumsy hand — offer itself to heaven in a spasm of fiery aspiration, as if in atonement for the unlighted altar which had so long lain cold and dead beneath its roof — on that same day Uncle Ben was sitting in attendance, dumb, faithful attendance, on his old friend and new wife. For the poor decrepit old soul, with the greenish locks, was ill unto death. This marriage had made almost no difference to the two old people, in their round of accustomed actions. Whether alone or in the presence of other people, Uncle Ben always addressed his old friend as "Elviry," and spoke of her to others as "Mis'" Snow. The force of habit was strong, well-nigh unbreakable now. She, for her part, throughout this "state of matrimony," as the marriage service puts it, which had continued several months, always spoke to her new husband, and of him, as "Benjamin." Uncle Ben really lived in his garret over the carpenter's shop, with his cats and his new violin ; but he made day-long

visits to the other house, with great regularity, and there he alternated violin playing (on his old instrument) with a little quiet rug braiding, which he carried on as simply and earnestly as ever.

There was a new contentment in the old woman's heart, in those days, and her wish to be legally married to Benjamin was justified. Occasionally she glanced at the grim picture of the turgid tyrant on the wall, with a deprecatory expression, and fancied that his stern features had relaxed a little — they never had relaxed much — in token of approval.

As for the "help," in the family, the spinsters still kept up their attitude of superior virtue, and treated Uncle Ben with studied neglect (although he was never aware of it, and they thereby lost the keen edge of their virtuous joy). One of the maids, however, was a widow, and she took a tolerant and sympathetic view of the situation, and privately packed hampers of good food for Uncle Ben's consumption with his cats, in the morning hours of the garret.

Thus did the old man lead his gentle "Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde" existence; and, to the end, his neighbors near the garret never knew about his belated experiment in wedded life; his plunge into the sea of matrimony made so mild a splash that few heard or felt it.

But all this twilight of content was to end. The honeymoon, pale and neutral as it had been, was fading into deeper shadow. Stretched upon a couch in the sitting room lay "Mis'" Snow, and near her sat Uncle Ben. She had suffered a stroke of paralysis, a week before, but had partially recovered, and was now able to move about, with help, and could talk, though imperfectly. On this afternoon, however, she grew very feeble, and remained lying down. Uncle Ben was busy, in his always moderate way, on a rug which was to be

sold to the hardware man for one dollar; and certainly, considering the number of the colors in the fabric, it was well worth the money.

The wrinkled old face, near him, seemed troubled, and the faded gray eyes looked over at him from time to time with an appealing expression. Presently she said: "Benjamin, I wish you'd play something. I always like to hear you play."

Uncle Ben paused in his weaving, waited to give the suggestion time to percolate through all the corners of his brain, then arose, laid aside his work, and took his violin. After playing two or three familiar old songs and hymns, he stopped to tune his violin. "Seems ter me I never see this fiddle run down so before. I cal'late ez haow that 'ar string won't stan' much more screwin' up."

"Benjamin," said his wife, and hesitated before going on. "Benjamin, I've been kinder jealous of that fiddle of yours sometimes; but I don't feel so no longer."

Uncle Ben offered no reply, and the old woman went on, slowly, "I've been wonderin' how you'd git along after — after I pass over, Benjamin."

The old man saw that she was in sad earnest, and he began to show disturbance, himself. "Naow there, Elviry, I wouldn't take on thet way. You ain't a-gwine ter pass over jist yit, I reckin."

She slowly shook her head, and reached out her well and manageable hand to him. This need of his honest grasp she had rarely manifested; but now she seemed eager to have him close beside her. He drew his chair over, and the two sat clasping hands for several minutes. It seemed to comfort the old soul; and she rested, with closed eyes, and a faint smile of content on her face.

"Seems to bring up the old times, Benjamin, when I

shut my eyes and hold your hand. What good times them was! Them times when we used ter drive over ter the huskin's and the bees, over to Sandersville. And that great party that Squire Newbegin gave, over to the Corners. Cyrus drove me over. Don't you remember, Benjamin?"

"Er — yaas — er — yaas, I do," responded Uncle Ben. "Only I didn't hev no gret ov a time merself, 'cause I wuz nearly froze, outside, toward the break-up of the party, a-holdin' the hoss an' waitin' for you folks to come aout."

He spoke calmly, bearing no malice or envy, in retrospect, as he had not borne it in the frigid reality, fifty years before. His words reminded the old woman of the difference which had existed socially between them, in the old days, a chasm of not great breadth at its widest, and now quite bridged over.

"Benjamin," she said, after a little, looking again at him with a new expression of concern, "Benjamin, was you ever converted?"

The old man gave the unexpected subject his candid consideration, for a few moments, and then rejoined, "Waal naow, Elviry, I can't say ez I've been a perfesser, but — but I've be'n a prayin' man, these many years."

He spoke almost timidly; and then as she ventured no comment, he made bold to go on. "I never made much sense o' some o' them revival notions, Elviry, but I've seen — I've seen the Lord, Elviry — hed Him clus ter me many a time."

"But wa'n't there a first time, Benjamin? a first time, when you felt you was saved?"

She looked at him, with a real anxiety in her aged face, and pressed his hand as she spoke. And the old man replied firmly, "I allus felt safe enough, I guess, 'cause I knowed thet the Lord wuz a-lookin' after

things, but I reck'lect the first time I seed Him; it wuz when I wuz a-singin' 'Majesty,' in the choir-seats, over ter North Wakefield. It wuz powerful, thet 'ar experience was, an' I didn't jes' believe anybody else hed ever felt Him so powerful, until I cum across thet story in the Bible, 'bout Saul a-goin' off ter Damascus ter persecute. I hed read it before, but it hadn't meant anything ter me; but after thet day and 'Majesty,' I kinder reck'n'd ez Paul hed seen it all, 'bout ez I hed. An' — an' sence then, sometimes ez I'm a-playin' suthin' on the fiddle, I git a kind er glimpse er the same thing, an' then I know thet the Lord is a-runnin' things all right. I can't quite explain it, Elviry, any further than that," he continued helplessly; "except ter say thet I guess the Psalmist hit it 'baout right when he said, 'Thou coverest thyself with light, ez with a garment.'"

"Yes, yes," responded his wife, with sudden animation. "That's about the truth of it. And, Benjamin, I guess heaven is full of that same light. Leastways," she added more quietly, "I shall know all about it soon."

He was on the point of offering some protest, at her speaking thus about going, but she shook her head and continued, "I hope, Benjamin, that there will be violins in heaven, because then you will enjoy yourself so much; you see, Benjamin — I — I have thought about this a good deal, and you know I — I shall have — I shall have — him (pointing toward the portrait on the wall), and you — you won't have — well, we'll be friends, anyhow, won't we, Benjamin?"

"Sartin! sartin sure!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, with confidence. Then he took up the subject of violins in heaven. "I've figgered on thet idee consider'ble," he said, in his candid, meditative way. "An' it kinder

stumps me. Yer see, Elviry, ter hev fiddles, yer hev ter hev catgut; and —"

"But," interrupted the sick woman, helpfully, "don't you think cats will live forever, Benjamin? You know you do. I've heard you say so."

"Yaas, yaas," responded the old man, cautiously. "But ef cats gits ter heaven, they'll be live cats, yer know — allus alive; an' then, Elviry, where's yer catgut a-comin' from?"

There was no reply to this perplexing question, and Uncle Ben's brow became more and more clouded. But presently he seemed to realize that he was adding, unnecessarily, a gloom to the rather dark conversation, and he broke out cheerfully, "But there, Elviry! I reckin thet the Almighty kin fix up a little thing like thet." And he grasped his beloved violin resolutely, as if to make sure of it now, and began playing, "When I can read my title clear."

Scarcely had he ended the melody, when the door opened, and the maid ushered in the doctor. He was a young man, of good address, with a general theory of cheering up his patients; and he chatted on, as he shook hands with both old people, and perfunctorily tried his patient's waning pulse. Then he asked about her various "feelings," and listened, as interestedly as he could, to a long recital of pains and aches. Afterward he examined the several bottles and boxes, which contained the medicines he had prescribed. In doing this he carried one of the vials over to the light, nearer the window, and summoned Uncle Ben to inspect it; but the request for advice was merely a blind; the physician used this method of getting a word or two alone with the old man, and told him how very feeble the sick woman was, and that she might "pass away" at any time. Though outwardly unmoved, Uncle Ben was

really much shaken by the dread words. He stared blankly, and tottered rather than walked back across the room.

The physician was correct in his judgment. He knew, as well as did the sinking old woman, that her strength was ebbing; but he spoke encouragingly, and at the end of his call, as he withdrew, he promised to come again early in the morning.

After his departure there was a long silence. The patient was exhausted by her efforts to narrate her symptoms, and Uncle Ben had no special suggestions to offer. "Benjamin," she said feebly, after a while, "you may empty out a little of that medicine into the sink, there in the entry, and — and, Benjamin — jest throw away four of them pills."

Uncle Ben's face indicated a mild surprise, but he set about executing her commands. When he returned to her side, she explained as well as she could, poor soul: "I — I don't want to hurt his feelings, and I know that them pills and that medicine don't do me a mite of good; so I guess that's the best way to dispose of 'em."

Presently she looked up at her old friend and asked, so feebly that he could hardly hear her, "Benjamin, it's awful good to have you with me. You've been — you've been — a good — husband to me, Benjamin."

The word "husband" came reluctantly from the colorless lips; and she turned, as she spoke it, toward the portrait on the wall. Then she sighed, and her eyes closed slowly. "Benjamin, dear," she asked, with eyes still closed, "do you suppose — do you suppose they will call me — 'Mrs. Snow,' in heaven? Or will they call me — 'Mrs. Birch'?"

Uncle Ben was terribly put to it for a suitable answer. He groaned slightly, as he clumsily but tenderly

arranged her pillow, and answered with a happy inspiration, quite uncommon with him, "I reckin, Elviry, ez haow we'll all hev new names up there; don't you think so?"

A slight pressure of the hand was the dying woman's response, and in a few moments she whispered: "I feel — sleepy. I — I think I will just take a little nap." And she relaxed her grasp, and rested quietly, a long time.

The day was nearing its close. The room was becoming shrouded with shadows, and the lights began to appear in the streets, and in the houses opposite. Uncle Ben had a feeling that the hour was a solemn one, and he sat, like a patient old soldier, at his post; and if the room had been lighter, you might have seen one great tear after another steal out from beneath his eyelids and trickle unheeded down his cheeks. An hour passed, and still the old woman remained silent, her breast heaving slightly, at longer and longer intervals. Then suddenly she started up and exclaimed: "I see — I see — a great light. Oh, Benjamin, a — great — light." And in a moment, more quietly, reaching out for his hand: "Play — play something, Benjamin! Something soft — and sweet — like — like that other music I hear."

And Uncle Ben, with an awful desolation creeping over his aged heart, took up his violin softly and played "O rest in the Lord!" And the old violin sang its comforting message, tenderly, and the furrowed face on the pillow seemed to grow smoother and smoother, and at last the rest came — the peace of God; and poor old Uncle Ben sank on his knees, beside the couch, and sobbed and prayed, and sobbed and prayed.

CHAPTER XXII

HIS SIN FOUND HIM OUT

"Then goeth he and taketh unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." — Luke xi. 26.

So Emmanuel Church lay, a heap of ruins, and a great weight of responsibility rested upon the persons who composed the Board of Trustees. To the pastor of the church the blow had been severe and the strain very great. Yet, deeply concerned as Ronald Carnaquay was, the next day, as he stood near the smouldering heap, concerned for the welfare of the society, he recognized in his heart one deeper anxiety still, and that was an anxiety about the woman whom he had borne in his arms out of the rain of fire the day before. He could not forget the terror and yet the ecstasy of the perilous journey across the area of the church; and, as he gazed now over the unsightly rubbish, he found himself reflecting: "There — just behind that twisted girder — was the door, and there she and I entered. And down along yonder line of bricks and mortar we hurried, to reach her pew. Where was that pew? Exactly where? Probably under that heap of charred beams. And from that point," he continued, following the track by eye and by memory, "we started along this side, she keeping close after me." He recalled the contour of that determined little face, as he had glanced back at her from moment to moment. "On we fought our way, until the door was again reached. Just over there!"

The partially molten organ-pipes pushed up out of the débris and helped to mark the place. Then came that minute of peril, of despair. And there must be the very corner where he laid down his precious burden; then a dash for the platform in front of the organ, and a quick run back to the door, a few strong blows with the massive chair, and then that cooling fresh air. After that, a gathering up of the dear, fainting form, and a few strides through the doorway — and safety.

Often as the place had been a scene of oratorical triumph to him, it now recalled no "waiting congregation," hanging in suspense upon his words; it recalled no joyous elation of spirit, such as he often had experienced on that platform; it recalled only one memory — the memory of his struggle, with her in his arms, with her close against his heart — a struggle for her life and her love.

He tried to remember her exact manner toward him. He could see again her face, at first defiant and determined, then pale and anxious, then with a faint expression of entreaty in it; and finally he was almost certain that the soft arm about his neck — which he could feel, even now, and thrilled as he felt it — had a clinging trustfulness in it, which meant more than her audacious lips or her challenging eyes had ever expressed.

He went, of course, that evening, to inquire about her welfare, and was told that she was exhausted, and unable to see anybody. The next day he went again, and sent up some flowers to her — some Jacqueminot roses, as red as the tint in her full, rounded cheeks. Again the next day, and a message came down to him from her, thanking him for "saving" her from the "awful consequences" of her "wilful conduct."

He read those words over and over. They seemed to indicate a change of manner, if not a change of heart;

possibly that last; he longed to believe so. "It is a clear case," he said, addressing himself in an undertone, as he left the house. "You are hard hit, Carnaquay. You can't blink the plain fact. You love this little piece of teasing impudence, this taunting, contemptuous young woman, more than you love all else in the world." Then he ended his soliloquy with a groan; for the outcome was not evident.

He walked from Mrs. Guthrie's house to the house of Dr. Mixer, where a meeting of the trustees had been appointed. Immediate steps must of course be taken, toward rebuilding. When Carnaquay entered, all the members of the board were there, except Mr. Wilbur Blaney.

Dr. Mixer called them to order, and began by remarking upon Blaney's absence. There was one person among their number who could have explained his absence, but that man, Thomas Marshall, remained for the time silent. Blaney, had he been present, would have been expected to start the discussion; but as he was not visible or audible, Dr. Mixer was obliged to take the initiative. He began by briefly mentioning the fact of the disastrous fire, then referred to the prosperous condition of the society, and then, in his deliberate and oily way, he spoke of "rebuilding," as the real problem before them. "We have cause to rejoice, brethren," he said, "that although we have been cast down, we have not been destroyed; we sorrow, but not as those without hope."

Here Mr. Pidge wriggled with joy, and piped out a faint "Amen"; for he knew that Dr. Mixer, and he, and perhaps others present, were thinking of the heavy insurance that the society carried.

"I may also refer to the fact here, in this confidential meeting," continued the chairman-host, with a sly twinkle

of his specious eyes, "that the value of our church property has not, at least, appreciated, of late, by reason of the building of that canning factory on the lot next to us; also, that extensive repairs were considered advisable by us at our last meeting."

He had an air of insinuating shrewdness, on his great full red face as he spoke, and now waited for remarks from others. "What I want to know," spoke up one of the trustees, "is just how much insurance we have been carrying."

This was the moment for Mr. Pidge to rise and produce a memorandum-book. He and Dr. Mixer had talked it all over beforehand. "I will read to you, gentlemen," said Mr. Pidge, in his shrill voice, running his freckled fingers up through his fiery fringe of hair as he arose, "the list of companies, and amounts due from each."

It was one of those moments of temporary supremacy which came to the mechanically minded little man, occasionally, and spread a general warmth throughout his slender and somewhat anæmic anatomy. But, at this particular time, he was doomed to meet surprise, and disappointment, and despair, in quick succession. "Mr. Chairman," spoke a deep bass voice; and Mr. Marshall arose, and Mr. Pidge paused, note-book in hand.

"Mr. Chairman, I am sorry — to bring — bad news here to-night — very bad news." The mill-owner's voice was labored and almost stammering, and he shifted from one foot to the other. But his honest face was determined, and his eyes were fixed on some point on the opposite wall. "I think it will be only a waste of time for Mr. Pidge to read that list of insurance policies, because — because — the insurance in them is nearly all bogus, and we have hardly any insurance at all."

Everybody stared and waited; even Dr. Mixer's face

was bereft of its customary commercial smile, and the other members of the board held their breath, in wonder and alarm. Then Mr. Marshall, with a deep sigh which was almost a groan, so burdened did he feel, went on. "The story, in a nutshell, is this," he said: "our church property was insured through Wilbur Blaney, and he has not insured it at all, has returned forged forms of policies to our clerk, Mr. Pidge, and to-night our society hasn't more than a thousand or two dollars, to meet its loss with."

He stopped and pulled out his handkerchief, to wipe his face, for he was perspiring furiously, although the temperature of the room was not high.

"Where is Blaney?" asked somebody, sharply. And several voices echoed the inquiry.

Mr. Marshall at once replied: "I wish I knew. He has run away. I got a list of these policies from Mr. Pidge, yesterday, and began looking them up; for I had held suspicions of Blaney, for some time. As soon as I had discovered the bogus quality of the first two, without waiting for others, I took a policeman and went to Blaney's office and then to his house; but he was gone. I at once informed the city marshal, and he has spared no effort to run the man down. But as yet there is no clew to work upon. I next looked up the other policies, and only one or two very small ones are sound. The sum of the matter is, so far as I can find out, that Blaney has swindled a good many people, by this rather desperate kind of deception; he has forged policies on the best risks, has pocketed premiums, and insanely trusted to luck not to have one of his risks burned."

The mill-owner waited a moment, and then sat down. It was a long speech for him; but, few speakers ever moved their hearers more deeply than had he. "I saw

Blaney at the fire," exclaimed one member of the board. And several others verified the statement. All recollected, too, that he was in a dreadful state of excitement. Then he had disappeared, and might now be thousands of miles away — as indeed he was.

The orderly form of the meeting was now much disturbed. Carnaquay remained silent. He saw what the tremendous import of this embezzlement was, for him. To stand by the society, and rebuild, with a large insurance, was one thing; to do the same when there was practically no insurance money, and to raise the needed sum by subscription, and still hold the society together — that was a very different prospect, and somewhat appalling. But Ronald Carnaquay, essentially commercial as he was, had good sound notions of commercial honor; and in a few moments his decision was silently made, and he awaited developments.

These came soon. After Mr. Marshall had told about Blaney's ownership of the liquor saloon and house, on the North Side, and had expressed his profound regret that he had allowed that surprising discovery to slip from his mind, he cleared his throat and said, "I wish to pledge myself for five thousand dollars, toward the rebuilding of our church, either on its present location or elsewhere." Then he seemed somewhat relieved.

The conversation became general and was very animated. Finally Carnaquay's clear business head made itself felt. He requested Dr. Mixer to call the meeting to order. The worthy "Doctor" was in a confused state of mind, but managed to follow the suggestion. He foresaw extensive demands on his own pocket-book; and at his age he was not as ready to lay good money "on the altar," as he had been in younger though less prosperous and less avaricious days.

Carnaquay spoke calmly and clearly, and affirmed

his readiness to stand by the society, if they so desired; and astounded one or two of the members of the board — though not all — by pledging himself to one thousand dollars of subscription, toward the new church.

After him several others, having caught the spirit of the hour, made generous pledges; and last of all Dr. Mixer, groaning inwardly, and mentally calculating how many sales of cases of "Emollient" it would take to offset the gift, stated that he would be responsible for two thousand dollars.

As for Mr. Pidge, poor Mr. Pidge, shrinking and gasping in a corner of the room, partially hidden behind a bronze Venus, it was not the kind of occasion suited to his nature. He had little or no money, poor fellow, and his heart sank within him, as he reflected on the abyss of insolvency over which he had so calmly lived his clerkly life. He fancied that he was more blamed and hated by his fellow-members than he really was, because he did not realize that they never regarded him as much more than a recording machine; they did not expect business sagacity from him, and therefore did not greatly blame him when he was found to lack it. Accordingly, he kept out of sight as best he could, feeling like a criminal; and the bronze Venus was so occupied with her own insufficient drapery that she did not notice him; and thus once more, as often before, Art remained strictly and impassively unmoral, and conscious Sin sheltered itself behind her.

CHAPTER XXIII

"AT BEST A CONTRADICTION STILL"

"He sought, with well-practised and delicate art,
To surprise, from Lucille, the true state of her heart;
But his efforts were vain, and the woman, as ever,
More adroit than the man, baffled every endeavour."

— OWEN MEREDITH.

HAD anybody asked Ronald Carnaquay if he understood human nature, he would probably have replied, after a certain amount of precautionary explanation, that he did, and in so replying would have meant, unconsciously, "masculine human nature"; but, had his questioner inquired, more definitely, if he understood feminine human nature, the reverend gentleman very likely would have hesitated, at least a few moments. Still, on reflection, he might have ventured a "yes" to even that inquiry; for, had he not preached sermons on "marriage," and "the choice of a helpmeet," and "duties of mothers," and "the true home," and the like? All of these sermons presupposed a knowledge of various phases of feminine aims and motives and even faults. But, in all his preparation of these and similar discourses, the Rev. Ronald Carnaquay had not felt the doubt and self-distrust which now he felt as he tried, with unprecedented earnestness and even anxiety, to analyze the condition of one woman's heart, in its attitude toward him. There was so much more at stake, now, than in the preparation and delivery of his confident sermons. It had mattered comparatively

little to him, in his preaching, whether he was sound or not, in his affirmations about feminine affections and weaknesses and duties. Now it was of the deepest concern to him, that he should read aright the exact condition of Mrs. Guthrie's heart, both toward marriage in general and toward a particular marriage in which he should be one of the contracting parties.

"Marriage in general!" Ah, there was that first marriage of hers! He had learned what he could about it, and was convinced that it was a union of the slenderest possible tenuity — a kind, dreamy old scholar, anxious for the safety of a pretty and charming ward, and guarding her by the legal tie of marriage from possible mistakes and unprincipled adventurers. Yet again, there was that Bible. How fond she had seemed to be of it! What peril she had dared for its sake! Was her conduct due to affection, or caprice? He had found the book, in his coat-pocket, after the fire, where he had hastily thrust it, and had carried it with him to her house to return it; then, on the very steps of the house, the idea had seized him to withhold it, and give it to her in person. He had a feeling that he would like to see her receive it, after she had risked so much to obtain it; he might be able to read, in her manner, her feelings about it and about the one who had given it to her.

Thus he caught at every straw which might indicate what Mrs. Guthrie's feelings were. He must not make any mistakes, when he seemed so near the attainment of his object. For he realized enough about her nature to believe that she was both wilful and intense, and might suddenly and impulsively take an adverse position with regard to him, and afterward hold to it, in the face of all reason, and at the cost of all happiness.

So he again took the book, and purchased more roses,

and went forth on his quest, feeling more irresolution than any audience of a thousand souls had ever aroused in him, and sure of one thing only — that he loved this capricious, brilliant woman, with all his heart, and he must, and he would somehow, win her.

Carnaquay rang the door-bell, and was shown in. A few minutes of waiting — she had never kept him waiting long — and Mrs. Guthrie entered the parlor. With a quickened beating of his heart he saw that she wore a rose — and a Jacqueminot, too — one of his, presumably.

He advanced, and they shook hands. No attempt now on his part, as at their first meeting in Miss Metcalf's house, to retain her hand one instant beyond the conventional moment. "I called to inquire if you have recovered from the excitement of the fire," he said, formally. "And also to give you this book." He extended the volume, and watched her closely as she took it.

"Oh yes! the Bible!" she said, simply and sweetly. "I am glad to get it again. It nearly cost — it nearly cost us our lives."

He noted the momentary hesitation over the pronoun, and then the use of the plural "us." He was glad to be included or, rather, to have her include him in the book's valuation. "I was fond of it, before," she continued, sitting down in a large Morris-chair, "and now it has an added value."

He thought he had never seen her more attractive. The same rosy tint was in her cheeks, though a trifle fainter, and her eyes were brilliantly alive. She seemed very ready to talk, and the conversation naturally turned upon the incidents of the conflagration. He let her lead, and the play of emotions in her expressive face charmed him more than ever. She did not, however, express any anxiety about him; not from lack of sympathy or tact, he was confident. He fancied that she

avoided any phase of the subject which might call forth more intimate interchanges between them; and when he casually referred to the peril which they two had undergone, inside the burning building, and, from force of the oratorical habit, let his voice express anxiety for her, she skilfully led him away from that mood, and chatted about the carelessness of poor Matilda Fifield, and then about the orchestral concert which was advertised for the following week.

He could hardly repress a sigh of disappointment, for he now saw that she was consciously holding him off, and did not wish any confidences of sympathy or interest. If he succeeded in coming any nearer to her, it must be by his own determined control of the conversation. "I found the burning of my church a new experience, and not altogether a pleasant one," he remarked, as casually as he could; but something in his tone brought a change into the manner of Mrs. Guthrie. Her vivacity suddenly ceased; it ceased too suddenly, he decided, to have been quite natural.

"Yes, it must have been very trying," she responded, more quietly, relaxing in her chair.

"I did not know that I was so much attached to the place, until I saw it being slowly devoured by the fierce flames."

"It did burn fast," assented Mrs. Guthrie, with prosaic conviction.

"I can hardly say, however, that I have enjoyed my work as much, during the past few months, as I did before that."

"Indeed!"

"Although," continued the clergyman, who saw that she was leaving him the floor and was not very responsive, "I have been much perplexed and depressed, for several months. I will not attempt to conceal from

you, Mrs. Guthrie, that fact, and the cause of that fact."

He thought he saw her gather herself together a little in her chair, but he was not sure. "I have come to you, to-day, with the fixed resolution of speaking plainly to you. I know that you regard me as a shallow egotist and a sensational preacher; so be it. I cannot hope to alter your opinion; I —" He arose from his seat and stood erect before her — "erect and handsome," she said to herself. "I wish to say, however, that I value the applause of gaping crowds but little; I see now, as never before, that the human heart has deeper needs than idle praise and fitful admiration; it has need, before all else, of love — deep, trustful, abiding love; that is —"

Mrs. Guthrie moved uneasily in her chair. She had averted her eyes, as he spoke thus significantly, and at this point, as his voice became more constrained, she suddenly looked up at him, with a demure expression such as he had often seen there, and asked, mischievously, "Which sermon are you quoting from, Dr. Carnaquay? Is it the one on 'Love the fulfilling of the Law,' or is it —"

The clergyman's dark face flushed, and he bit his lip, to keep back his vexation. Again she was wounding his vanity, as so often before. Then he bowed ceremoniously. "I was not aware that I was quoting," he said coldly. "If you assert that I am, we will leave it that way." Then he regretted his vexation, and was uncertain as to just how to proceed.

The clever woman before him cut the Gordian knot. She sprang up impulsively, went to a table near by, and brought to him a box, containing a dozen or more volumes. "I wish you to accept from me," she said sweetly, charmingly, with all mischief gone, "this set of

Carlyle. Believe me, I appreciate the great service you rendered me — that dreadful day."

As she stood almost penitently before him, looking up at him with a childlike entreaty, a great tumult of passionate emotion took possession of him, and he felt an almost irresistible impulse to throw his arms about her and draw her to his heart; that, or to kneel at her feet, as to one who was infinitely above him. His egotism, his deeply rooted vanity, seemed quite to have left him; he was no longer the "Rev. Dr. Carnaquay of Emmanuel Church"; he was simply the passionate lover, eagerly responsive to the slightest will or wish of her whom he loved. There was no concealing his fierce heart-hunger; it gleamed in his eyes; and the sensitive woman instinctively recoiled from his impetuosity, and took a step backward. Then her old spirit of raillery returned, and she said, in a very matter-of-fact tone, "Please take these books; they are so heavy."

He took them, but with his eyes fastened upon hers, in mingled passion and reproach. Her gaze, however, now met his own, with steadiness and even defiance; and when he said, in a low and subdued tone, "Thank you! I thank you very much," she returned his thanks, with a light gesture, and again took up her position in the large chair.

"My dear Mrs. Guthrie," he began again, now openly bent on attack, now resolved, in all humility yet in full determination, to get adequate speech with her, "I came here with the deliberate intention of speaking to you plainly of my love for you. I cannot longer remain silent about it. Egotist though you think me, relentless as you seem to be toward me, I must and will — "

If he had kept on with the almost heartbroken humility in which he began this little address, there is no saying what effect it might have had on the wilful but

sympathetic nature before him; but, as he referred to the somewhat delicate subject of "egotism," a little repellent strain came into his voice, and his listener was quick to feel its presence.

"Yes, you are an egotist," she interrupted, candidly. But even as she spoke the almost brutally frank words, poor Carnaquay suddenly perceived that she spoke them not bitterly, nor angrily, but with a certain calmness which bordered on kindness. "But then," she added, nonchalantly, "most men are." Whereupon Carnaquay found himself conjecturing about the remote and misty character of the late Dr. Guthrie.

"An egotist, yes," she went on, "but not — but not so much so, as you were when I first met you, I think." Somehow, the idea or judgment did not seem to disturb her, nor did it have contempt concealed behind it. He therefore took courage.

"My dear Mrs. Guthrie," he exclaimed, with hope arising in his heart, "perhaps I am; but such as I am, all that I am, I offer you — my honest love, my truest devotion. I — "

He approached, as he spoke, and was inclined to seize her hand, or even, passionate man that he was, to kneel humbly at her feet; but he felt that she would rebel at this. After all, most women, however they may exact homage, really wish to do the kneeling, at least in spirit, themselves; they make a brave show with the sceptre, but they have a secret longing for the cross. They desire to have strength offered them, and not weakness. And Mrs. Guthrie silently motioned him to sit down. "I thank you," she said with an emotion which she could not wholly conceal; her voice was not so calm and clear as before. "A strong man's love is not to be lightly trifled with."

Ronald Carnaquay hoped, in his very soul, that this

was her real conviction, rather than that expressed in her baffling, elusive badinage. He started to his feet, with a quick indrawing of the breath; but her voice caught him, half risen, "Sit down, Dr. Carnaquay! I beg you to sit down." And he sank back, like an obedient child, covering his face, for a moment, with his hand.

"I will speak to you plainly," she said in a low musical voice, "very plainly. I will not ignore or seem to ignore the fact of your sincere affection for me. I already owe you much; I — yes, I owe you, probably, my life. I owe you, also, a plain, honest statement of my attitude toward you. I am not unappreciative of the great honor you do me; but I cannot marry — that is — I will say frankly to you, as I have often said to myself, that I think more highly of you as a man than as a minister."

She leaned toward him, as she spoke, and the words seemed to come with regret, yet with irrevocable resolution. He almost groaned as she said them. She continued, unconsciously moulding this general proposition into more concrete form, as she proceeded: "I do not think you are the right sort of man to be a minister. As a minister you are lacking in qualities which seem to me essential to that sacred calling; whereas, as a man, you — you — "

He held his breath, so eager was he to hear her finish the sentence; but she did not finish it. Either she did not dare, or she did not care to. However, she was much stirred, and her beautiful eyes were glistening with moisture. As she became more excited, he grew calmer. "May I understand, then, that if I were not a minister, and offered you what I do now offer, that you would listen to me — listen more — favorably?"

She opened her lips, as if to reply, then closed them and gazed fixedly across the room. There was entire

silence between them, for several moments. Her lips became gradually more and more compressed, and he knew that her will was intrenching itself behind the barricade she had thrown up.

"Oh, Mrs. Guthrie! Oh, Adeline!" he burst out, "you must not be cruel to me." And he rose, and continued, "You cannot be cruel. You do care at least somewhat for me. You have shown me, in many little ways, your warmth of heart. You came to meet me to-day, wearing a rose which I have given you. I cannot —"

She caught the flower from her dress and threw it upon the floor, with the red of her cheeks spreading like a fanned flame. She was angry and rebellious, at any suggestion that she had committed herself to him in any way. He sprang toward her, caught her hand, and cried: "No, no! I did not mean so much as that. Forgive me! You are — you are yourself; and I — I — am your slave." Then he stepped quickly away from her, for he felt her hand grow rigid in his grasp, and she seemed to lift herself above his own tall height. He dreaded her anger, her scorn. And he continued, standing quite apart, "I ask no more than to be allowed to offer you my love. I am a minister, and a minister I must remain. Mrs. Guthrie, Adeline, I have no choice at present. My duty binds me."

He spoke rapidly, but with increasing steadiness. She turned and looked at him, surveyed him coldly and yet with a puzzled look. He caught her meaning, her inquiry. He understood that she was unaware of his exact position toward his profession and toward Emmanuel Church. He caught eagerly at the idea and went on: "Since the church building was destroyed, I have stood in a position of new obligation to the society. I will honestly admit that a week ago I seriously contemplated giving up — giving up a profession

for which — for which you have shown me that I am essentially unfitted."

There was moodiness and a trace of bitterness in his voice; but it vanished, as he proceeded more quietly: "However, I am now in honor bound not to desert this people. The trustees have expressed the wish that I continue, and continue I must."

He closed, with a bow toward her that was not artificial, not histrionic, but resolute, final. He saw the color come and go in her rounded cheeks, and would have given the world to know exactly what she was thinking about.

The two faced each other, and eye met eye. He could not be mistaken; a gathering respect and regard shone in those expressive eyes, and one hand moved, as toward him. He started to respond to it; but she drew back, although they were several paces apart. She was vital with feeling and sympathy, but she would not allow her emotions to dominate her.

Then she suddenly stooped, took the rose from the carpet, and with trembling hands, tell-tale hands, restored it to its place at her waist. Then, catching her breath, in a gasp, and with a half-suppressed sob, she pointed impulsively toward the door, and stood, beautiful, with tears in her eyes, yet resolute, yes, tender, and waited for him to go.

He went slowly out. And his heart leaped, with joy and hope; for, with his sanguine temperament, he felt convinced that she loved him and that he must simply wait.

He went out, forgetting all about the volumes of Carlyle; and the next day they were sent to him, with the leaf of one volume turned down; it was the volume containing "Sartor Resartus"; and on the margin of the page thus indicated, he made out a faint pencil-mark. He read the sentence, "Pale Doubt fled away to the distance; Life bloomed up with happiness and hope."

CHAPTER XXIV

"THOU ART THE MAN"

"Around the man who seeks a noble end
Not angels but divinities attend."
—R. W. EMERSON.

THE next day, Miss Metcalf came to call on Mrs. Guthrie, her "dear friend Adeline," as she addressed her, on taking her hand; and Mrs. Guthrie knew, as well as though she had been told outright, that the tall, snowy-haired spinster had some disagreeable element in her errand. There was a widening of the mouth when she smiled, and, with the smile or grimace, a slight furtive closing of the dark eyes, which always gave warning, to those who knew Miss Metcalf well, that she was bent on some unpleasant errand. Her bodily movements, too, at such times, exhibited a suppleness which hinted at a suppleness of character within. So that when she declared, with effusion, that she came over to ask after her "dear Adeline's" welfare, Mrs. Guthrie gave her a conventional answer, invited her in, and waited to discover the real purpose of her coming.

There is never a youth or maiden, in love, who does not labor under the fond delusion that he or she conceals the secret of the sacred passion from all profane eyes; yet hardly one goes about the streets and among friends, having his heart on fire with genuine romantic love, who does not carry that plain testimony of its pressure, in face and manner. Kind friends, when they are at length informed about the mutual relations of

two hearts which they had long before perceived, affect surprise, gentle or great, and encourage the delusion that utmost propriety and secrecy has been preserved. Thus all the world not only loves a lover, but recognizes one at sight.

Thus with sharp-eyed, distrustful Miss Metcalf; she had long known the growing attachment between Carnaquay and Mrs. Guthrie. As to its state of progress she was not sure; which of the two was the more deeply under the magic spell she could not have said. But the general trend of events was very patent to her; and she had been at first violent, in her rebellion and jealousy, but lately quiet and vindictive and watchful.

"I am so glad," she went on idly, taking off her gloves, and letting her eyes rest critically on a beautiful new opal ring, set in diamonds, — "glad that you came through that dreadful experience, unharmed. Oh, it must have been a fearful experience."

"It was," assented Mrs. Guthrie, laconically.

"With that ceiling falling all around you, too!" Her voice was soft, and extremely flexible and insinuating. Each sentence seemed to turn upward at the ends, like Emperor William's world-famous mustache. "And then, how — how — remarkable, to be carried out of the building, in a man's arms!" And the sensitive spinster bowed her head and pressed both hands over her eyes, as if to prevent herself from seeing her own too vivid fancy.

"What a strong, handsome man Dr. Carnaquay is, Adeline! Isn't he?" she presently ventured.

Mrs. Guthrie nodded, silently.

Miss Metcalf's more gushing emotions ceased, at this point, and with a quieter tone she remarked: "He ought to be in some kind of occupation where he could use his

splendid physical strength. At least I don't think he was born to be a minister."

Mrs. Guthrie tried to conceal her annoyance. Probably she did not succeed in her attempt; for her visitor was an adept, herself, at ruses and guerilla warfare. "I often wish," continued Miss Metcalf, affecting to be interested in her shapely hand, "I often wish that we had dear Mr. Freeman back again, he was such a sincere soul."

"Sincere soul," indeed! This was interesting, coming from a duplex nature like Miss Metcalf's. And Mrs. Guthrie could hardly repress a smile, at the word, as she recalled the underhand manœuvring of Miss Metcalf, a few years before, to push the Freemans out of Emmanuel Church.

"And as for preaching," said Miss Metcalf, holding up her hand to catch the light through an opal. "Why, I find Dr. Brown, on Fourth Avenue, quite as satisfactory a preacher as Dr. Carnaquay; and the pews over there are a great deal more comfortable. I do hope that when Emmanuel Church builds again, it will see to it that the pews are more comfortable than the old ones were."

It was noticeable that she didn't say "when we rebuild," thus identifying herself with the church, but she spoke of "Emmanuel Church" as a body remote from herself; thus she divulged, unconsciously, the chasm which was opening between her heart and the church which had always been her home.

She talked with apparent freedom, but her hostess knew that she had some secret errand in coming, which had not yet been revealed; what that errand was, time would tell. "I always was very fond of the Freemans," continued Miss Metcalf, seeing that Mrs. Guthrie had nothing to offer. "I sometimes think that our people did not fully appreciate their worth. And Mr. Freeman

has grown so much, in every way, since he left us. Why, I often see articles of his, referred to in the magazines, and he lectures now at Amherst College. I haven't heard him preach, but I am told that he has developed into a quite powerful speaker. Have you heard him, Adeline dear?"

"Yes, I have," responded Mrs. Guthrie, drawn out of her reticence by this clever appeal in favor of Freeman, for whom she had always entertained great respect and regard. "He is a strong preacher — very simple and direct and earnest."

"Oh, yes! that is what I have heard," said Miss Metcalf. "And that direct kind of preaching, that takes hold of people's lives, and unearths their weaknesses and sins — that is the right kind of preaching. That is the kind I like best." And she let her snowy head droop sentimentally on one side, and toyed with her costly rings.

"As for Dr. Carnaquay," she continued, "I really think that he has outstayed his period of usefulness. I hear people say that he is not a man to wear very long."

The speaker knew perfectly well Mrs. Guthrie's general attitude of sympathy, and perhaps of affection, toward the man whom she was sweetly flaying alive; but she had come, on malicious purpose bent, and moved towards her goal, her accents becoming more tender as her suggestions became more bitter. "I haven't paid much attention to most of the increasing complaints which I have heard, but that matter of plagiarism — that seemed to me altogether too much. I knew that Dr. Carnaquay was a shallow and ill-grounded preacher, but I did not suppose that he would steal. I —"

"Miss Metcalf!" It was Adeline Guthrie's turn, now, to lead the conversation. The brilliant young widow

was on her feet, with flashing eyes and flushed cheeks. She now saw the motive which had brought her vindictive visitor. There was no longer need of silence and watchfulness. Miss Metcalf had delivered her stab; it was her one blow, and she had driven it home. Her hostess threw off all concealment of her indignation. "Miss Metcalf, I think you do Dr. Carnaquay a grievous wrong. I supposed you were his friend. You claimed to be his kinswoman, and now — "

"No, no, I — but you see, my dear — I — " Miss Metcalf affected profound surprise and alarm at Mrs. Guthrie's excitement, yet in her heart she was delighted at the result of her visit. Her plan of vengeance had succeeded. "I supposed you knew, that — that you were aware of this matter; and — and I did not know — "

She could hardly repress the wicked glee in her cruel heart, as she strove to appear concerned for Mrs. Guthrie's feelings. But she saw that her errand had really been completed, and her visit was near its end. She arose and came toward her victim, with a treacherous smile, putting out her hand.

Mrs. Guthrie threw all reserves and proprieties to the winds. She was excited and indignant. She had really not heard a whisper of this piece of foolish scandal, and had not known about the plagiarism. She drew back, and slowly articulated: "You are a false and cruel woman. Few would dare say it to you, but many think it. Let this interview end all intercourse between us! Miss Metcalf, permit me to lead the way to the door!" And, with great dignity, she moved across the room, opened the door, and stood there waiting, such a personification of indignant scorn, that the Metcalf suavity lost its balance, and the Metcalf volubility found no avenue of adequate expression; a moment later the door closed between them, cutting their strained friendship, as irre-

coverably as the shears of Atropos sever the thread of a human life.

When once her artful and malicious visitor was gone, poor Adeline Guthrie sank into a mood of profound depression. She went upstairs, bathed her hands and her face, and tried to recover her poise of mind. But in vain. The words of her visitor had indeed cut deeply. "Plagiarism? Stealing?" She had heard nothing of this before. Was it possible? Miss Metcalf had spoken as though the thing were an acknowledged fact, and current throughout the parish. Could it be true? She tried to analyze Carnaquay's character afresh, as a schoolgirl reworks her problem, after an answer has been suggested to her, to see if she can evolve that answer, by any proper arrangement or rearrangement of her figures. She could not believe that he would do such a thing. And yet — and yet — he had often shown a strange laxity of feeling and perception, on points of clerical conduct which seemed to her to call for strict, vigorous, moral decisions.

At length she put on her hat and cloak and went out. She was resolved, in her distress of mind, to see Rebecca Freeman. She trusted her, implicitly, and although she was not prepared to open her heart freely and fully to any one, she was longing for sympathy, and knew well that Mrs. Freeman would give it.

When she entered the snug little apartment, over the grocery store, Mrs. Freeman immediately noticed her agitation of manner, and her disturbed countenance. "Why, Adeline, my dear," exclaimed the minister's wife, coming forward and impulsively putting out both hands, "how warm you look! How excited you seem!" And Mrs. Guthrie, holding both of her friend's honest hands in her own, thought she felt strengthened by the very physical contact.

"Here, let me take your cloak and hat, my dear!" said Mrs. Freeman, cordially. "I — I — wasn't looking for you at this time, but I'm always glad to see you."

"Oh, Rebecca," exclaimed the young widow, seating herself and trying to regain her usual calmness, "you are — you are a true and faithful friend!"

This was somewhat abrupt, as both saw, and the visitor relapsed into silence. She hardly knew whether she wished to say anything, even now that she had come with that express purpose. "Did you have something you wished to tell me?" inquired Mrs. Freeman, as gently as she could.

"Yes, dear, I — I did have," responded Mrs. Guthrie, with a sigh; and she added with a faint smile, "but I'm not quite sure that I have now." Then her face became serious and anxious again, and, after waiting for a few moments, she doubled on herself once more. "It's about Dr. Carnaquay."

"Yes?" answered Mrs. Freeman, encouragingly, but she dared not assume much, on this slender suggestion, and therefore awaited her friend's more explicit explanation.

"Rebecca, did you ever hear any talk about Dr. Carnaquay's preaching other people's sermons? Plagiarism, you know. S-stealing, in short."

Her voice was tense and anxious, and there was no mistaking her interest in the person named by her. Mrs. Freeman now had her clew, and saw that Mrs. Guthrie had somehow stumbled suddenly into this very unpleasant knowledge. She felt sure that there was some sort of understanding between the two, and now Mrs. Guthrie must have learned, for the first time, about Carnaquay's sin of months before. How to meet her and answer her inquiries, and yet not hurt her deeply — that was the problem.

"Yes, I have heard about such a matter," replied she, smoothing her gown, in a mechanical way, as she spoke. "I heard about it long ago. Had you never heard any such rumor?"

Mrs. Guthrie did not reply, directly. "Do you think it is true?" she asked, instead. "Do you think he did really — really steal from some other writer?"

Mrs. Freeman's heart was touched with sympathy for the troubled woman. She came over and leaned against the chair and stroked her head, and thus they did not look full in each other's faces, and Mrs. Guthrie was free from the feeling that she was being closely observed. "My dear Adeline, I will say plainly that I fear that he did, in at least one sermon, use a few paragraphs which he should not have used. I speak plainly. That is the only way for me."

"And — and — how sure are you about what you say? And — what if he did? Oh, Rebecca, dear," and she hid her tearful face on her trusted friend's shoulder. "Talk to me! Tell me all about it! And — and what you think, yourself, about it."

Then Mrs. Freeman took up the clew, and spoke carefully, sympathetically, telling the facts in the case, yet adding her own softening comments and her husband's. She knew, now, that Mrs. Guthrie loved Carnaquay, but she knew, also, that this wilful woman was capable of forswearing all the happiness of which she might be dreaming, and binding herself irrecoverably to her loneliness of life. "Lawrence has a high opinion of Dr. Carnaquay, I know. We have often talked the matter over," she continued, in a soft and comforting and reassuring way. "Lawrence says that it was wrong, and that it was a wrong — a sin — which grew partly out of Dr. Carnaquay's lack of clerical training, and his lack of association with ministers and

the professional standards. Not that such an interpretation excuses the wrong, but it does, in a measure, palliate it. I know, moreover, that Mr. Marshall, who is the soul of business honor, has actually offered Dr. Carnaquay a very important position as agent for his mills in the West, and I have heard him say, with reference to the matter of — of the plagiarism, that Dr. Carnaquay was a much better man than minister. A rough-handed compliment, one might say, but genuine and significant."

Mrs. Freeman continued to stroke her friend's head, in a gentle, loving way, and there was entire confidence between the two, and much comfort to one of them. Mrs. Guthrie's breathing grew quieter, and her body relaxed more and more, and presently she said, lifting her head and wiping her eyes, "I wish — very much — that Dr. Carnaquay — were not — a minister." Then she sighed, and added, as if in soliloquy, "He wishes so, too."

Again, after another long pause, she continued, earnestly, "Oh, Rebecca, dear, you don't know how lonely I am. You have such a true and noble husband, to talk over everything with; but I am alone. Oh, if I only had some one, as you have, to trust and lean upon, and — and love — and to love me. There! I really don't know," she broke in impulsively, smiling through her tears, with that mixture of pathos and humor which was so characteristic of her, when with a trusted friend, — "I really don't know whether I wish to love or to be loved. Anyhow, I'm a wretched, lonely, loveless woman."

There was a step on the stairs, and Freeman came in. Mrs. Guthrie made an instinctive feminine start toward concealing signs of her disorder and distress, but as quickly gave up, and with a smile, when she discovered who it was.

Lawrence saw at once that he had stumbled in upon a "scene," but he showed no consciousness of it; however, Mrs. Guthrie said promptly and gayly, drying her eyes with a bit of dainty linen beautifully embroidered — a handkerchief, or better, a finger-kerchief, "Well, there is no concealing the fact; some one has been babyish, but now she won't cry any more; she is now grown up." And she arose, lightly, throwing off her mood of despondency, and began questioning Lawrence about his work.

But one could see — and the two watchful, sympathetic friends did see — that her gayety was forced, and they were not surprised, as they followed her vivacious lead in the conversation, to see how easily she recurred to the subject of Emmanuel Church, and — without directly naming him — to Ronald Carnaquay. Presently she remarked, in an impersonal but slightly labored way: "I wish you would come, Mr. Freeman, and be the minister of Emmanuel Church. Hasn't this 'Babylonish exile' of yours lasted about long enough?"

Lawrence took the suggestion good-naturedly. "Ah, but you have one clergyman already. What do you wish? A curate also?" That was modest of him, but he always assumed that Ronald Carnaquay was his superior, in pulpit power, really not appreciating how much strength, in public speech, he himself had developed. But he saw that there was more behind her light words than at first appeared, for Mrs. Freeman took up the thread of conversation hastily. "Adeline was telling me, just before you came in, that Dr. Carnaquay has had serious intentions of giving up the ministry."

"Ah, indeed!" responded Freeman, and then added, mischievously, speaking to Mrs. Guthrie, "hence these tears — sorrow at the prospect of losing a pastor?" But he saw that although this charming young widow at-

tempted to meet his thrust with a smile, the attempt was not very successful. So, in default of any other retreat, he began a more serious discussion of the situation of the church.

"I am well occupied with my present work," he remarked, laying down some books which he had brought in, and seating himself. "I believe I am better fitted for just the kind of work I am doing, than for the more conventional churches. You see, I have some peculiar notions." He crossed his legs comfortably, and smiled as he spoke. "And those notions seem — from what I read in the New Testament — to have been held also by a Great Leader, and by his immediate followers; they are ideas of an aggressive sort; a theory and ideal of an active, earnest kind of Christianity, which shall not only search out and remedy individual cases of want and distress, but shall grapple boldly, intellectually, and morally, with the principles and problems and customs of human society, underlying these myriad cases of individual need. I would rather have a small number of brave, earnest adherents than a multitude of luxurious followers. I see how wise the old Jewish leader Gideon was, in weeding out the inefficients from his army, by that ingenious water-test of his."

"I don't quite catch the drift and force of your allusion," interposed Mrs. Guthrie, nonchalantly; "but I fancy that water-tests might be used to-day, and would result in very sound moral and social classifications, according as the water were given internal or external application."

Lawrence noticed that she spoke more calmly, more like her old, piquant self, and he was pleased. He therefore retorted: "Oh, you are quite astray in your understanding of my illustration. You must look up the matter." Then he continued, for she seemed inter-

ested: "Somehow the Christian church almost always loses its spiritual vitality and moral earnestness, yes, and moral courage, when it becomes opulent and powerful. Christian history shows us countless illustrations of that ebb and flow in spiritual life, with the ebb and flow of worldly position. There are, however, other reasons for desiring wealth; and one is, that if a church has the independence which comes from an assured income, its leaders and its members can more boldly attack many forms of sin and ignorance, which otherwise they would not dare to touch. While I see the strength and loyalty which grow from a congregation's contributing to the support of its church edifice and leadership and activities, I believe also that a strongly endowed church, in the control of a few high-minded, earnest men, can be more effective and aggressive against many kinds of sin and injustice, than any church is likely to be which is obliged to constantly defer to the whims and worldly standards of those who furnish its financial support. Moreover, the sordid commercialism, which so threatens to eat out the life of many churches, grows in part out of the intense competition among churches and sects; if there were fewer churches, this struggle for existence would be less fierce, and the higher aims of church life would not be so sacrificed to the material necessities."

While Lawrence was speaking, growing more and more interested, himself, as he went on, the door quietly opened, and Mr. Marshall came in, unperceived. He stood, in uncertainty, for a moment, then, trusting to his easy, friendly footing in the family, he sank softly into a chair near the door and listened.

"I more and more class churches," continued the minister, "with educational organizations; and, together with them and philanthropic institutions and reformatory

movements, I believe they should be independent, largely, of support from the people whom they seek to influence and educate. No college is annually supported by the fees of those who are passing through its curriculum, nor is a 'home' or a hospital maintained by the payments of its inmates; all these institutions depend on the large gifts of persons who are not directly benefited by them, at least at the time when they are giving the money. And churches, also, which are established on the same basis, and are well administered, do far more effective work, in their several communities, than do such churches as subsist on annual collections, and are seriously embarrassed by the need of satisfying the passing whims and prejudices of the people who hold the purse-strings, — people who loose them only on condition that their own business methods be not attacked, or their social ease be not disturbed."

The earnest speaker lowered his voice a little, as he continued, even more earnestly and as if reflecting aloud, "I have never, until the past year, desired money; that is, more money than I need to live comfortably as now." And he smiled, as he remembered his exact social surroundings. "But of late I have wished that I were the possessor of wealth. I see not only a multitude of individual needs which I would like to meet, but, as a minister, I have an increasingly clear ideal of what sort of church I would like to direct, if it could be financially independent, and if I could —" here he smiled again, — "could have my own way about its work."

Here, as he paused, a slight noise from near the door drew the attention of the three friends; and, looking that way, they discovered their silent listener, who at once came forward, smiling and apologizing for this intrusion. "I did knock," said he, "but the master of the

house was holding forth so vigorously that I received no welcome. So I just came right in."

They all shook hands, pleasantly, and the group-atmosphere of the room underwent that change which a social atmosphere always undergoes, as one or more new persons enter it. Still, in this case, the change was not great, because the four were good friends, and much in sympathy, despite the apparent differences in their habits of life.

Mr. Marshall expressed his satisfaction at Lawrence's remark, and then his face became quite serious, as he said: "I had a definite errand, in coming here to-day, at this hour. A sad errand it is, too." And he looked from one to the other. "It is about our strange old friend, Uncle Ben Birch."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, impulsively. "Is he —" And she did not finish the sentence.

Mr. Marshall nodded his head slowly, sadly. "He is — dead. I have just come from his — 'home,' I suppose we must call it. I went there, this morning, to see him, on a matter of business. He had looked to me, as you know, for various things of late. I found the door of the old loft partly open, and I went in. And there was poor old Uncle Ben, half reclining on the rough bench that was his table, his head on his arm, and — quite gone, the body cold. He must have died yesterday."

A gloom fell upon all, as the kind-hearted mill-owner delivered his sad message.

"How we shall miss him!" sighed Lawrence. "He really filled an important place, in our chapel life; and all the people had come to understand and love him. I never knew such single-mindedness as his. Simple, gentle, and sincere, in a marvellous degree, he seemed incapable of varying from the exact truth. I have

sometimes thought, with shame, that the amusement he sometimes afforded us, by his literal understanding and expressions of feelings, was the measure of our own mendacity, conventional or personal."

The conversation was carried on, in a sombre key, for some time. The news of Uncle Ben's death threw a cloud over all their hearts. Presently, Mr. Marshall, who seemed to have something of importance on his mind, turned toward Lawrence, and spoke in a very deliberate and even formal tone of voice: "Mr. Freeman, do you realize how much this death of Benjamin Symmes Birch means to you?"

Lawrence was surprised at the interrogation, and said so at once. Whereupon Mr. Marshall continued, in the same serious way: "My friend, I believe you. But it is my duty to remind you that Benjamin Symmes Birch left a will."

"Yes — I recollect his saying something about that," responded Lawrence, in a hesitating way. "I think I sent him to you, did I not?"

"You did. And I drew up a will for him. As you know, I have had some training and experience in such matters."

Lawrence was about to say something, his face still wearing an expression of perplexity; but the mill-owner motioned to him to be silent.

"I drew up the old man's will," he continued. "It was simple enough. In it he left everything to you. Very well. At the time when that will was drawn up, he was only 'poor old Uncle Ben,' without ten dollars' worth of property in the world. But — when he died, he was the surviving husband of Mrs. Elvira Snow, widow, a woman of large property; when she died, several weeks ago, Uncle Ben became her heir and the possessor of considerable wealth."

The faces of the three listeners were indicative of the astonishment which filled their breasts. Mrs. Guthrie was leaning forward in her chair, her eyes fixed upon the mill-owner, her whole attitude showing an eager, joyous excitement. Mrs. Freeman, with face pale, glided softly over to her husband, who was seated near a table, and put her arm about his neck, while her gaze still remained riveted on Mr. Marshall's lips. As for Lawrence, as the flood of this strange and joyous intelligence swept over him, his lips moved, as if in prayer, and then he leaned forward on the table, and buried his face in his hands.

When he lifted his head, in a few moments, he arose; saying, in a low and earnest voice that was husky with emotion: "The dear, gentle, generous old man! God give him rest and love, in the home of many mansions!"

Even the sturdy mill-owner himself was much moved by the scene, and his strong, earnest face (so much of it as could be seen above the dense, bushy, black beard) gave evidence of profound and noble satisfaction in the good fortune which had come to his friend. He went on, after a while, to explain that the Snow estate had not been settled, but that there was no question about the direct transferal of the property. And then, his voice and manner changing to a more ordinary matter-of-fact tone, he said presently, "I think you were saying when I came in, Mr. Freeman, that if you had a large amount of money — if you had it, you would like to put some of it into your ideal church."

"I said so, just that," replied Lawrence, firmly but inquiringly, and wondering what was coming next.

"Very well! Then what say you to making of our new Emmanuel Church your ideal church, putting into it a part of your new wealth, and — I know what I am saying — exercising with me and one other man, — each giving a

sum equal to your own, — exercising complete control of the entire property, and directing all its services of worship and its philanthropic and reformatory work?"

The two men looked straight at each other. Lawrence began, "But there is —"

"Dr. Carnaquay?" broke in the mill-owner. And Lawrence nodded.

"Dr. Carnaquay will be only too glad to be relieved of his charge, in order to become my agent," said Mr. Marshall, promptly, like one who had carefully thought out a problem, and had his answers, adequate and convincing. I have long wished I could secure such character and capacity as he possesses. With an agent like him, in the South and the West, I can double my business. Dr. Carnaquay has consented to remain the pastor of Emmanuel Church, only from a sense of duty, in this crisis which has come."

At this prospect of a prolonged discussion of Emmanuel Church and its pastor, the young widow's cheeks were observed, by watchful Mrs. Freeman, to be growing deeper and deeper in rosy coloring, and in a moment more Mrs. Guthrie sprang hastily up, went over and kissed Mrs. Freeman in a fervid manner, then passed to Lawrence and took his hand. She seemed on the point of saying something, but, instead, gave his hand a warm, lingering, almost entreating pressure, and went out, saying good-by, quietly, to each, as she opened the door.

"I have presented this matter to you," began Mr. Marshall at once, in the same determined and business-like tone, "only after full deliberation and consultation. With Dr. Carnaquay as our minister, Emmanuel Church can undoubtedly rebuild and again prosper. But what sort of prosperity will it be? You know as well as I do. And there are scores of sensible, devout people in our

society, who have tired of that commercial kind of success. We want our church to be a religious organization, not a bureau of entertainments. You have ideas of worship, and of philanthropic, reformatory methods which I like. And now is the opportunity of your life to put them into practice. What say you, Mr. Freeman, what say you?"

Lawrence had been pacing the narrow diameter of the room, restlessly, while the mill-owner was delivering this long speech. When Mr. Marshall ceased speaking, and stood erect, looking toward him, awaiting his answer, Lawrence stopped short in his restless walking, gazed directly at the mill-owner, and the two pairs of eyes, honest, earnest eyes, exchanged that look with which brave, self-reliant men give their hearts into each other's keeping. Then the minister strode across the intervening space, put out his hand, and said, quietly, resolutely: "I will back my word with my act. If all details can be arranged, for both church and chapel, as you affirm, I will give of my wealth and of myself, to build and develop a true Christian church, which — God helping us — shall do more than exist in lukewarm sinlessness, but shall lay hold of neglected, down-trodden human life, and lift it, and teach it, and save it from its own lower self."

CHAPTER XXV

GATHERED FRAGMENTS

"Earth owns, at last, untrod
By sect, or caste, or clan,
The fatherhood of God,
The brotherhood of man.

"Fraud fail, craft perish, forth
The money-changers driven,
And God's will done on earth,
As now in heaven."

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

THERE now remains but little to say, regarding the new life upon which Emmanuel Church soon entered. Since there was little or no insurance money, the church, as an organization, was practically bankrupt. And its future lay in the hands of whoever could furnish the money for rebuilding. Mr. Marshall had not spoken without warrant, and knew where at least two-thirds of the necessary sum was coming from, under the conditions named by him to Lawrence Freeman.

Accordingly the work went forward. Lawrence made his assignment of property, as he had agreed; and he, together with Thomas Marshall and Mr. Marshall's friend, who had so liberally contributed to maintain the chapel—these three as trustees, owned the entire church property. Mr. Pidge was made clerk and treasurer; whereat his depression of spirits, which had been sad to behold, was straightway removed. "Doctor" Mixer was "excused" from his duties as chairman of the trus-

tees, and was not likely to attain any official position whatever, in the new organization. Dr. Carnaquay (now become Mr. Ronald Carnaquay) "pushed" the Marshall mills, all through the West, with remarkable success, and seems likely to become soon a member of the firm. He also contributed five thousand dollars, instead of two thousand dollars, to the building of the new edifice. (He calls it "a quit-claim payment.") And whenever he is at home from his business trips, he attends divine service in the hall which the church temporarily has rented, and sometimes he gives "talks," over at the chapel on the North Side, and fairly electrifies those plain people by his "wonderful command of language."

As to Carnaquay's relations with Adeline Guthrie, people are not "quite sure" (even after giving the matter that careful, conscientious attention which people so kindly give, under such circumstances). It is noted that she is gradually leaving off the sombre hues, in which she was accustomed to dress, and that she has recently appeared, in a very becoming hat with a large white ostrich feather. Also, she receives letters regularly, when Ronald Carnaquay is "travelling"; also it is known that he carries a photograph (a female face it is) fastened upon the inside of his watch-case; but nobody has obtained a sufficiently clear look at it to be able to identify it, although Sister Train and Sister Moulton and Sister Jennings all three asked him, one Sunday after service, what time it was — and the big clock in the hall facing them, admonishing them all the time.

One word, in passing, about Olive Marshall. She does not peruse such dark and dreary volumes as she did, and she read aloud to her brother Ned, one evening, not long ago, a poem in masculine-looking manuscript,

which she thought very "lovely," but she would not give the author's name. Moreover, she has been seen, of late, to have, each Sunday, a fresh bunch of violets, fastened at her belt. In short, she seems quite restored in spirits, and takes a very optimistic view of the universe.

As for Miss Metcalf — she comes to church irregularly, but she avoids Mrs. Guthrie, and merely bows to Ronald Carnaquay in passing. Her reign in the sewing-circle is over. That was one of the stipulations which Lawrence made. Mrs. Bellaire is now president, and manages the affairs of the society with good judgment. Athough there is very little need of their frantic assistance, a group of loyal old ladies meet, twice a week, and sew and sew and — talk. But they do not discuss the minister, because he is quite independent of their comments and their votes. Poor confused Matilda Fifield has never fully recovered from the shock of the church conflagration. People are patient and considerate with her, and never even faintly suggest that she was in any way responsible for the — not calamity, but "blessing in disguise."

Yes, "blessing in disguise." For the fire burned up many things beside wood and paint, pews and carpets. It burned up many Pharisaic ideas and commercial standards, and impeding habits and customs. The congrègation is only about two-thirds as large as when Ronald Carnaquay strode up and down the platform, but it is a living forceful organism now, and not an assemblage of idle, curious spectators.

Several persons, of real intelligence and power and refinement, who were kept in the background, during the Carnaquay supremacy, have now came to the front, and take a more active part in affairs. Also there are many individuals, men and women of diverse and various

callings, who have gradually found their way to the hall, from all parts of the city, drawn there because the simple earnestness of the place appeals strongly to them. And, in the affairs of the city, Emmanuel Church is already making its power felt: it opposes frauds in the municipal government, pushes for reforms in existing laws, fights the cause of any who are unjustly attacked, and has become a veritable "church militant," hated by some, respected by most, recognized as a power by all. It has opened a coffee-house; and it offers rooms for labor-union meetings, where the odor of whiskey does not tempt the nostrils of honest men.

In short, Emmanuel Church is a live organization, whose ideal is not ease, but action; and when it enters its new edifice, its work will become still more efficient, and it will be more hated, and more loved, than even it is now; and thus it will find itself more perfectly in the line of organic and apostolic descent from him, our Blessed Lord, who was so hated, that men shed his innocent blood; yet was so loved, that millions of human beings have welcomed death, with his dear name on their dying lips.

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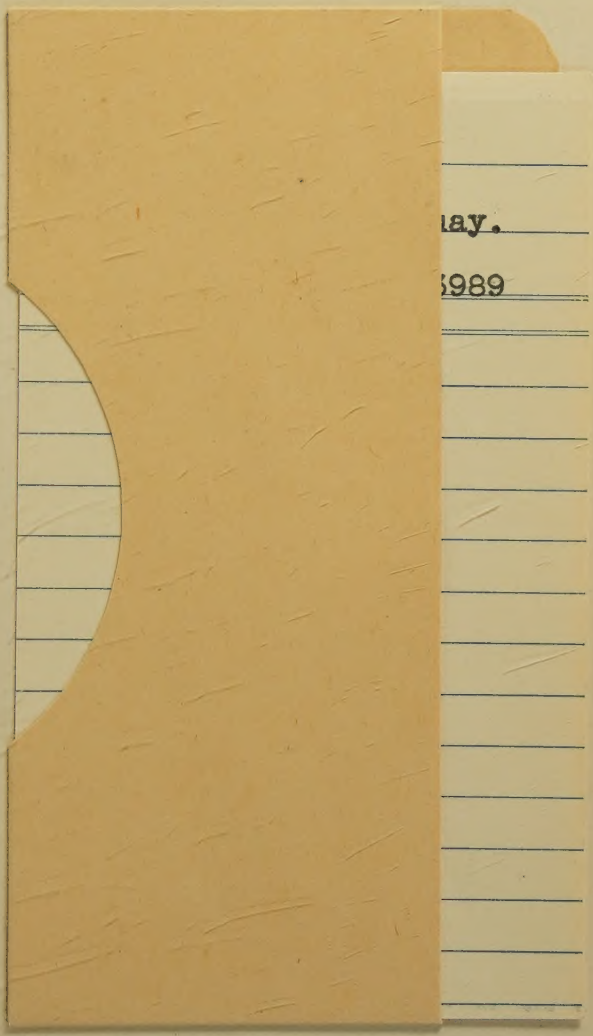
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